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CHRISTIAN CERTITUDE

CHRISTIAN CERTITUDE

ITS INTELLECTUAL BASIS

BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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TO

TWO EMINENT AUSTRALIANS,
WHO, AS BECOMES CITIZENS OF THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM,
HAVE THOUGHT AND ACTED GREATLY FOR THE LAND OF
THEIR ADOPTION AND THE EMPIRE OF THEIR BIRTH ;

TO

THE HON. SIMON FRASER,
SENATOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH, AND FORMERLY
A CABINET MINISTER OF VICTORIA ;

AND TO

THE LATE HON. WILLIAM McCULLOCH, C.M.G.,
FORMERLY VICTORIAN MINISTER OF DEFENCE, AND THE
FIRST MINISTER OF GREATER BRITAIN TO LAND
TROOPS IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE HOUR
OF THE EMPIRE'S NEED.

PREFACE

THE book now in the reader's hands will do a genuine and distinctive service for many minds, troubled with problems of fact and thought which lie near the basis of Christian belief.

The writer has at least one important qualification. He has himself felt the burden of such problems to an acute degree; he has had the courage to face them rather than elude them, and he knows what the struggle means. His academical training, in the course of which that struggle supervened, has also equipped him with mental method, and taught him how to read, and, in reading, how both to assimilate and discriminate. And a Power greater than that of strictly mental process has meanwhile kept alive and active in him the forces of conscience and of the heart.

The result has been a genuine insight and sympathy towards the doubters of his generation, a power, so to speak, to look and listen through their eyes and ears, and at the same time to speak to them in suggestions and reassurances which have been first proved and found valid in the typical instance of his own experience.

Early in my acquaintance with him I had an

opportunity of observing both the courage and the good sense of his evidential work among the working men of a northern mining district, disturbed and largely misled by a clever and vigorous atheist propaganda. The quality of thought and exposition brought to bear then was that of this book, only thrown, of course, into forms meant to arrest a popular while keenly alert audience, watching a public debate. The book has the advantage of presenting its message with the same sympathy and the same vitality, but with greatly developed method and fulness.

It claims to deal expressly with the intellectual basis of the Christian's faith. It is indeed well that this should be re-stated with all possible decision. Nothing is more certain than that the contents of Revelation are never anti-intellectual, never irrational. If it were so the very belief that our nature, including its strictly reasoning faculty, was the work of God would throw grave doubt upon propositions offered to faith which should even seem, to the best of an earnest and impartial attention, reverent and general, to be properly irrational. Once grant that we know in part, but that nevertheless in part we *know*, and it is vital to the full development of the faith that its intellectual relations should be examined and explained. Through the whole process will run the recollection of that wise precept, never to let what we know be shaken by what we do not know. But all the more, therefore, the examination of what we know is pregnant of result.

Meanwhile, the student occupied with the intellectual aspects of evidential study will invariably remember that the deepest and largest truths demand, even for apprehension, much more for anything like comprehension, not a part of our being but the whole. The proof of the faith is never to be handed over to the merely argumentative faculty, isolated and, as it were, in a vacuum. The nature of its contents makes this impossible. To any sure argument is necessary not only perfect work in inference, but true knowledge of premisses. And the premisses of Christianity cannot possibly be known truly when an intellect, however keen, approaches them in a spirit unchastened by awe in the presence of supreme mystery, and by something at least akin to penitence in the presence of sin. Acting out of relation with such a spirit, the reasoning faculty may deal with what it sees as cleverly as possible; but it will have seen what it deals with wrong.

Mr. Digges La Touche has handled the intellectual problem always with sympathy, always with thought and method equipped with adequate knowledge, and always also in the spirit of one who knows that head and heart are both necessary to a true grasp upon Christian Certitude.

HANDLEY DUNELM.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IT has been my privilege to have many discussions with earnest doubters in Australia, Ireland, and the North of England. When asked by University students, and professional and business men, to recommend a suitable book, I could only mention works, like Godet's "Defence of the Christian Faith," which did not cover the whole ground, or which, like Dr. Ballard's fine book "The Miracles of Unbelief," were written to meet other needs. The purpose of the present work is, therefore, solely constructive, and it is hoped that it will meet the need for a volume of Christian evidences which is at once fairly comprehensive and intermediate in character between the formal treatises on the subject and the many excellent popular handbooks written to meet other needs. The unavoidable size of the volume has rendered it impossible to include, as I originally intended, some chapters on Christian doctrine—for my experience is that a very large proportion of modern doubt has arisen from misconceptions of individual Christian doctrines. Hence it has not seemed advisable to include even a chapter on the Atonement—the central fact of the Christianity of the Lord Jesus Christ ;

but, if there is reason to think that this volume is achieving its purpose, a sequel on "Some Evidential Aspects of Christian Doctrine" will follow.

Meanwhile I have only to express my indebtedness to very many thinkers and writers, especially to the works of Bishop H. C. G. Moule, Drs. Wace and Orr, and to the admirable work of Dr. McCheyne Edgar, "The Gospel of a Risen Saviour." Sir William Ramsay has made it impossible, though, as Mr. Lukyn Williams has shown, some of his positions are open to very serious criticisms, for any student who has been trained in the historical school of a British University to dispense with his guidance in the interpretation of St. Paul. Sir Robert Anderson's racy and thoughtful books have opened up many new lines of thought to me. Above all, I must express my sincerest gratitude to the Bishop of Durham (to whose kindly sympathy and encouragement from the very inception of the book I owe more than I can say), Canon Glendinning Nash of Bradford, and my wife, who have read the book in manuscript and enriched it with many valuable criticisms and suggestions.

EVERARD DIGGES LA TOUCHE.

2, MELBOURNE PLACE, BRADFORD,
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INTRODUCTION

SEEKING AFTER GOD

AUTHORITIES

- I. COSMOLOGY.—J. H. Stirling, "Philosophy and Theology," pp. 305—317 (the best discussion); R. Flint, "Theism," pp. 96—130; H. Höffding, "Philosophy of Religion" (negative).
- II. TELEOLOGY.—F. Ballard, "Miracles of Unbelief," pp. 47—106; H. M. Gwatkin, "Knowledge of God," I., pp. 50—122; R. Flint, "Theism," pp. 131—209; J. Iverach, "Evolution and Christianity," pp. 59—68; J. H. Kennedy, "Natural Theology and Modern Thought," pp. 29—194 (by far the best discussion); J. Le Conte, "Evolution and its relation to Religious Thought"; J. Martineau, "Study of Religion," I., pp. 139 ff.; J. H. Stirling, "Philosophy and Theology," pp. 323—400.
- III. MORALITY.—A. M. Fairbairn, "Philosophy of the Christian Religion," pp. 61—93 (the best discussion); R. Flint, "Theism," pp. 210—233; J. H. Kennedy, "Natural Theology and Modern Thought," 233—276; J. Martineau, "Study of Religion," II., pp. 1—41; H. Wace, "Christianity and Morality," pp. 17—55, 189—238.
- IV. THE PROBLEMS OF SIN AND SUFFERING.—A. M. Fairbairn, "Philosophy of the Christian Religion," pp. 132—168 (the best discussion); J. Caird, "Fundamental Ideas of Christianity," I., 196—II., 73; Bishop C. F. D'Arcy, "Idealism and Theology," pp. 166—203; J. Martineau, "Study of Religion," II., pp. 52—138; Le Gros-Clark, "Paley's Natural Theology," pp. 468—545.
- V. REASON AND REVELATION.—Sir Robert Anderson, "The Silence of God" (very important); J. Caird, "Fundamental Ideas of Christianity," I., 1—54 (the best discussion); A. M. Fairbairn, "Christ in Modern Theology," pp. 385—399, 493—499; R. Flint, "Theism," 302—321; H. M. Gwatkin, "Knowledge of God," I., 123 ff.; J. Orr, "Ritschlianism and Other Essays," pp. 241—264.

12. 1²⁰
“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and divinity.”

ST. PAUL.

“Science, for instance, in other words, knowledge, is not the enemy of religion ; for, if so, then religion would mean ignorance.”

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

“Antecedently to experience, the exceptional resurrection of a human body from physical death is not more improbable than either conception of the universe. Either is unparalleled by aught else known to us. Yet the Universe exists ; a fact intrinsically more marvellous than even the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Well might St. Paul ask, ‘Why should it be thought incredible to you that God should raise the dead ?’”

CAPTAIN A. T. MAHAN.

“Search while thou wilt, and let thy reason go
To ransom Truth, even to th’ Abyss below ;
Rally the scattered causes ; and that line
Which Nature twists, be able to untwine.
It is thy Maker’s will, for unto none,
But unto Reason can He e’er be known.”

SIR THOMAS BROWNE OF NORWICH.

CHRISTIAN CERTITUDE

INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT CONFLICT

PROFESSOR HÖFFDING of Copenhagen has stated the real character of the conflict between religious faith and the modern world-view which is the most remarkable feature of modern intellectual life. He points out that the conflict is really not a conflict of fact but only a conflict of temperament.

“It is not so much the results at which science is arriving, or has arrived, which bring about the quarrel between science and religion, and condition the religious problem; but rather the whole trend of ideas, the entire habit of mind which empirical science has fostered in those who have developed under its influence.”¹

Indeed, it would have been more than miraculous if the epoch-making discoveries of the last century had left the habit of mind—which the old evangelical and catholic teaching had formed—entirely untouched, and it would have been fatal to religious thought for this to have happened; for the worst disaster which could

¹ “Philosophy of Religion,” p. 27.

come to the spiritual life of any age is that it should not be responsive to the thought of its age.

The discoveries in almost every field of human activity during the last hundred years have utterly removed the old landmarks of science and history. The immense antiquity which history, not to speak of scientific theory, has given to man has naturally led to a complete revision of all accepted theories with regard to his origin, and the unfortunate confusion of the fact that God made man with the methods which He employed in making him did much to give the newer learning a hostile bias towards Christianity. The consequence has been that religious faith did not recognise that its answer is given to an entirely different question to that asked by the empirical sciences, and has been forced into an apparent attitude of hostility to modern thought. The quarrel has, however, proved to be the old contention of the two knights over the colour of the shield; and, the moment that the difference of view point is recognised, the actual conflict ceases. The remarkable statement of Professor Höffding, who certainly does not write from a believing standpoint, shows how totally erroneous is the popular impression of an irreconcilable conflict between science and religion. The quarrel is not one of facts but of habits of mind. Such a quarrel is deplorable but not rational. It may have been a necessity if either religion or science was to learn its own limitations: for both claimed an authority which did not belong to them of right. If, however,

the conflict is over, as it certainly is in the upper reaches of thought, it is an imperative duty for Christianity to make the fact clear to those who are now involved in the turmoil of the retreating battle. Though the giants may have ceased from the struggle, the Rationalist Press Association and other small fry are still hotly engaging Christianity in the delusion that science and Christianity are still at war. While the battle may have ceased, the effects of battle are still with us and are likely to remain with us for a considerable period. Any struggle—especially a drawn battle—nearly always develops a hostile spirit between the combatants. Such a state of things can only be ended in one of two ways, either by an eirenicon or by a discreditable surrender of principle. The latter is equally inglorious to both parties and is bound to lead to renewed hostilities. We have a sufficient example of this in the panic-stricken surrender of position after position, which were not ours to give away, upon the merest indication that the filibusters of the controversy were about to assault them. If peace is to reign between the temperaments, it can only be by the frank recognition of the supremacy of the human intellect in the sphere of human thought, and by the surrender of all claims to unverifiable authority on the part of religion. In other words, we are now suffering from the unfaithfulness of the religious life of the last two generations to the principles of the Reformation, which after all has given to human thought this very doctrine of loyal submission to the

human reason as our God-given guide. It is, therefore, the religious duty of each age to take the method which has been worked out by its scientific labours, and to reconsider in the light of its greater knowledge the results obtained by the piety and wisdom of its fathers.

Whether it be for good or ill, the modern spirit has come to stay, and the only question which remains for us to solve is whether we are prepared to accept the methods of modern science and to proceed to recommend our faith to the many sin-burdened and anxious souls without our camp (who are too honest to the God-given light of reason to accept deliverance by submission to mere authority) by the adoption and adaptation of the methods of modern science to the objects of religious faith. This is the great religious question which remains for our age. Will it be faithful to the higher light and adapt itself to modern needs? or, will it take easy refuge in the truths which it knows itself to possess and let those without its camp work out their own salvation—or damnation? The answer which our age returns to these questions involves—not the truth or falsity of Christianity, for Christ is the Truth—but the fate of very many who are yet unborn, and the answer to the further question as to whether we have to pass through another age of doubt and degradation of every kind—for the degradation of religion involves the degradation of every department of human activity—such as is recorded in the discreditable pages of our eighteenth century history.

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF EMPIRICAL SCIENCE
THOSE OF THEOLOGY

It is of course absurd to expect that the methods of theology should be absolutely identical with those of any given empirical science, just as it would be absurd to attempt to apply the methods of biological research to the subject-matter of physics. But the spirit which animates, and the principles which guide, the biologist, also animate and guide the physicist: so that they are both members of the scientific brotherhood and know no irreconcilable conflict. Similarly, theological and empirical science generally should find a common meeting ground in the common possession of the principles and spirit which have only one object—the love of truth. The most curious and irritating thing about the whole controversy (which, though it has undoubtedly stimulated thought on the great problems of human existence, has also done incalculable harm to numbers of men) to a dispassionate enquirer—if any man who is a seeker after truth can be dispassionate in this controversy—is its purposelessness. There is not a single presupposition of theology which is not equally a presupposition of empirical science. The only difference between them is in the question they ask. Science asks *How?* while Theology asks *Why?*

It is easy to show that theological and secular science are based upon the same presuppositions. They both depend upon the reality of personal identity; both, in the last instance, involve an equal appeal to faith; both

appeal to probable evidence ; both assume the reality of the law of causation and both require a similar definition of experience.

If we cannot assume the real character of personal identity, there is little use in continuing this, or any other, discussion ; for we are not only entirely in the dark as to the object of the discussion, but we have destroyed the reality of the subject of thought by the denial of our own identity. Evidently neither empirical nor theological science can exist without this presupposition. It involves, however, far-reaching consequences. It is obvious that I am not entitled to deny the existence of my neighbour on grounds which are equally cogent when applied to my own existence. To deny his existence on the ground that for example the relations of his mind and body are an inexplicable mystery when I know equally little about the relations of my own mind and body is not a very rational procedure. Thus, it is the height of absurdity to urge objections against the existence of the Deity which are equally cogent when applied to our own existence. A sense of humour on the part of negative critics would save the world from much of their literature and from very many of their orations.

There is another presupposition of both classes of science which is usually regarded as a not quite legitimate perquisite of theology. Both secular and theological science make their ultimate appeal to faith. They start from faith in the existence of the subject of

thought and in the validity of its mental processes to come to a more or less well-reasoned faith in the existence, character, and attributes of the object of thought. If religion cannot demonstrate the validity of its results, neither can any secular science. The most either of them can do is to show that there is an overwhelming balance of probability in favour of a given conclusion. Demonstrative evidence is a class of evidence of which finite man may think but it never enters into his experience. Man acts upon probable evidence in the ordinary affairs of life : in other words, upon evidence which admits of degrees of certainty varying from the lowest probability to the very highest moral certainty. It is not reasonable to ask in religious matters for a different kind of evidence from that upon which we are usually content to act. To do so, is to imply that we act as a general rule without sufficient reason—and therefore that we are not truly rational in the last analysis—and involves the wholly unwarranted assumption that, if granted, we would be able to appreciate it.

There is another and almost more important common presupposition of both classes of scientific enquiry. The contention of Professor James that the Law of Causation is too obscure a principle to bear the reasonings of Natural Theology proves too much.¹ It would equally invalidate all science, thought, and action ; for the great assumption which underlies them all is that the thing which has begun to be must have an adequate

¹ " Varieties of Religious Experience."

and antecedent cause. It is purely arbitrary to say that it is invalid in the realm of theological science but valid in the realm of mental or physical science. If it is too obscure for rational action, even mathematics cannot escape from this *débâcle* of reason. We can give no reason in that event why twice two is equal to four rather than five; nor why subtraction should diminish rather than augment the result; nor, indeed, why it should not diminish it to-day and augment it to-morrow. It seems clear, therefore, that the principle of causation is a necessary truth. If it is not, we live in a mad universe and reason is dethroned. Only in that case do not let us commit the absurdity of talking about science or knowledge of any kind.

Theological science and the physical sciences alike appeal to the same kind of experience for verification; for the restriction of experience to those things which we perceive by our senses excludes all scientific theory from the pale of knowledge and consequently destroys both kinds of science. The experience, which science can accept as co-extensive with her knowledge, must include all the records of the past, the consciousness of the race—or else the labours of Newton, Darwin, and Kelvin have no meaning for their fellow-workers—and such scientific theories as that of ether which fills all space but never comes into phenomenal experience. If our definition of experience does not include all these facts, it destroys empirical science: if it does, the theological definition of experience is countersigned by empirical science.

Besides this, it is true to say that the sources of theological knowledge are, without exception, identical with, or similar to those of empirical science. Both turn to the realm of physical nature for facts on which to base their theories. Both, as they have need, draw upon human experience, both past and present. The only source of knowledge of the Divine claimed by theology which is not the primary possession of empirical science, is that of special Self-revelation of the Deity; and even this source of knowledge (though primarily of theological interest) as soon as it is given to man, becomes a legitimate object of empirical enquiry and source of empirical knowledge. Thus, our brief review of the presuppositions of theological and secular science gives the result that their methods and sources of knowledge are practically identical. The real difference between them is in the character of the question which they try to answer.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FACT THAT THE UNIVERSE EXISTS

Of the facts which come into our experience, none is more certain than that of the existence of the world. If, however, something exists, something must always have existed; for it is obvious that nothing is not a creative force and that it produces exactly nothing. Since, then, the world exists, there must be an eternal existence other than the world; for the one thing we do

know about the universe is that it is not infinite or self-existent. It is composed of finite and dependent parts ; and the addition of the finite can never produce the infinite, nor that of the limited the unlimited. Any existence which has begun to be is an effect ; and we get no nearer to the eternal and the infinite by piling effect upon effect than Xerxes got to personal immortality by collecting that vast army over which he wept as he remembered that all would have passed away and the glory of it within the short space of a hundred years. Hence the mere fact of the existence of the universe of which we form a part involves the existence of the Self-existent Eternal Being Whom we call God.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF OUR EXPERIENCE OF THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE

Almost the next element which enters into our experience after we have perceived the fact of existence is the fact of order. Whether we examine the constitution of our own minds or our experience of the external world, order is everywhere predominant. Sometimes, without suspecting it, we find that the order which we find inherent in the human mind has its counterpart in the realm of physical nature. Mathematical principles, which were reasoned out long generations past by the thinkers of Greece, have been revealed almost in our own day by the progress of astronomical and botanical science as playing an important part in the economy of

nature. The telescope and the microscope alike reveal an order which is almost equally sublime and oppressive in its universality. If astronomy has revealed the fact that the chances of the planets all moving in the same direction with a slight inclination of the planes of their axis to the planes of their orbits is as one in twenty thousand millions, the progress of entomology has shown us the perfection of the drafting of the butterfly's wing—a perfection of outline and drafting skill which reveals the rarest specimen of human art as, in comparison, a coarse daub. The finest scientific instruments cannot draw a circle which will bear comparison with that drawn by nature upon the wing of a butterfly. Whence came this order? It is the very height of absurdity to say that the coarse daubs of the best of human draftsmen required intelligence for their achievement; and at the same time to say that the marvellous perfection and adaptations of nature were evolved by the undirected forces of physical nature.

Nothing of late years has done more to establish in reality this fact of universal order than the establishment on a scientific basis of the theory of evolution by the labours of Darwin and Wallace. Hailed by some sceptics as a way of escape from the cogency of the design argument, and denounced by earnest believers (who did not perceive the difference between the fact and the method of creation) as atheistic in character, the theory of evolution has made the fact of a predominant order a universal and oppressive truth. Even

in the most trivial processes of nature it reveals an order which for sublimity and rationality surpasses the wildest dreams of the Paleys and Clarkes of a previous era. If it has changed the incidence of the argument and afforded a way of escape to the hard-pressed controversialist from the pressure of the argument from the human eye or the human hand by giving an opportunity of confusing the issue, it has revealed to us the means, the machinery, whereby the Almighty has worked out His purposes, and has revealed to us the unutterable rationality of the universe. "It is necessary to remember that there is a wider teleology which is not touched by the doctrine of evolution, but is actually based upon the fundamental proposition of evolution."¹ Evolution has not only revealed the uniform order of the universe and supremely vindicated the faith of teleologist and empirical scientist that the world is a rational world—it has effectually destroyed the Deistic conception of God, which regards Him as outside His universe. It has revealed to us an immanent Artificer by its revelation of the continuous operation of the Supreme Being in the processes of nature. The words of the Psalmist are the most perfect expression of the experience of the modern enquirer who appreciates the fact of evolution at its true value—"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? . . . I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth

¹ Huxley, as quoted by Ballard, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect ; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”¹ The great religious truth of the immanence of God has now become the most profound of scientific truths. What a picture of the relations of God to His universe is given to us by the modern scientific conception ! Working in profound obedience to His laws, the Creator is, within the conditions of matter and earthly existence, achieving His purposes of perfect sanctification and love to the honour and glory of His Name.

Thus, “ the world is a rational world, and we see no reason on that account to deny rationality to the Power from which all things proceed. If we grant intelligence to that Power, then evolution becomes luminous ; refuse to grant it, and we must simply regard the order as an ultimate fact, and say no more about it.”²

THE IMPLICATIONS OF OUR MORAL EXPERIENCES

When we turn from the realm of our external experience to that of our experience of ourselves, one fact pre-eminently stands out. It is not too much to say

¹ Ps. cxxxix. 7—16.

² Iverach, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

that the fact of conscience is the supreme fact in our experience.

“The mind is its own place; and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”

Nothing is more common than examples of the truth of these lines. The man who is at war with his conscience is never happy. The man who is at peace with himself contrives to be happy in almost any circumstances. Now, this phenomenon is one which deserves careful examination. How—and why?—is it that conscience has these powers? The consideration of two facts will help us to answer this question. The first is that conscience does not set before us any standard of either public or private utility as the judge of our actions. Instead, it sets up as the standard of self-judgment a pure idea—the idea of right—to which it expects us to conform our actions in all circumstances. Thus, it acts in an entirely opposite way to the law of natural selection. The latter works by the adaptation of the organism to its environment; the former by the adaptation of the environment to the organism. The second fact is that righteousness is in the last analysis a relationship between persons; for the consciousness of either good or ill desert is immensely quickened by personal relations. Many men who would be horrified at the idea of robbing a person, will employ all their ingenuity to defraud the Government in matters of income-tax. When conscience condemns a man for any action, his feelings are precisely similar. The same

sense of having injured another, the same intolerable sense of guilt presses upon the man whose conscience is uneasy. This seems to point to the fact that the ultimate judgment of conscience is really concerned with the relationship between persons.

A further consideration of some weight in this connection is the fact that an erring man can only be brought back to morality and self-respect by the establishment of personal relations, and by the fact that the moral sense grows dim whenever the sense of the Divine Personality wanes in a community. The lives and personal characters of the great moral teachers were the source of their greatest influence. An immoral Christ is an inconceivable Christ. If He is to be trusted, He developed to perfection through absolute dependence upon the Father. He is by universal admission the Paragon of men. Humanity looks to Him for its inspiration. He is the Source of all right, and the Goal of all endeavour. If the idea of right is not embodied in the Supreme Being, the Ideal Man came to His development through trust in a supreme error, and the moral Ideal of mankind found its inspiration in an untruth. There is another series of facts which confirms this interpretation of morals as the Divine in man. The world, as Bishop Butler showed long ago, is pre-eminently fitted to be a moral training ground for free beings; and man's physical nature is essentially an instrument for moral ends.¹

¹ Notes A. and B.

THE FREEDOM OF GOD

One would almost think that the existence of God so necessarily implied His freedom to act that a discussion of the possibility of the miraculous would be entirely unnecessary; but the scientific discoveries of the last hundred years have so impressed the modern mind with the thought of the permanence and invariability of natural law that it is loath to admit the possibility of the miraculous—that is, of manifestations of the supernatural within the sphere of human experience. The objection largely arises from the totally erroneous conception of miracle, which defines it as violation of natural law, and can be most satisfactorily met by reference to three considerations.

Let us glance for a moment at the operation of natural laws—that is, of the observed and constant relations between things. It is, generally speaking, invariable; but the moment a new force is introduced into our calculations, the operation of such a law as gravitation, though the law itself remains constant, is modified. Similarly, it is a law of nature that sunlight invigorates the human frame and is absolutely necessary to its continued health, but it quickly dissolves the corpse.

This brings us to the second factor in the problem—that of freedom. Now the evolutionary hypothesis has revealed to us a God who actually does work from within the chain of mechanical causation; for the essence of that theory is that the present state of

affairs has been achieved without the arbitrary intervention of external forces. If God, therefore, deigns to work within the system of mechanical causation, His actions are analogous to human activities. It is well, however, to remember that empirical science has no veto which she can place upon the activities of God, nor indeed can she even say that any given action cannot be explained by the operation of natural forces. It may be, for aught we know, part of the law of nature that a sinless man should rise from the dead. The most we can say is that no such law is known to us ; and the refusal to believe in the possibility of such a law is only an example of the stupid tendency to become enslaved to the results of experience.

The third fact to which attention must be given in this connection is well expressed by the old adage that "Knowledge is power." Our fathers moved about the shores of our lakes and estuaries in rude coracles ; to-day, our men of war and ocean liners cross the Atlantic in a very few hours. Dean Swift was once delayed at Holyhead for three weeks by contrary winds ; but to-day we cross to Ireland in three hours. In the eighteenth century a royal dispatch from London took several days to get to Dublin ; to-day, wireless telegraphy will carry the message in fewer minutes than it then took days. What is the secret of these extensions of our means of communication ? It is simply that our knowledge has so enormously increased that we are able to bend the forces of nature to our will.

Now, God is, *ex hypothesi*, omniscient, and He, therefore, has perfect knowledge of all the laws of nature, their possible combinations and permutations, so that no element is ever absent for a moment from His calculus. It is, therefore, the height of folly for us to say in our ignorance that He cannot bring about any result He chooses without violation of the laws of nature. Thus, the question of miraculous interference, regarded from the purely philosophical and scientific standpoints, is absolutely an open question, and the particular instances of miraculous activity which are alleged must be decided upon their merits.¹

THE TOLERATION OF EVIL

There is, however, a grim and terrible fact which enters into our experience. Sin is the one irrational element in a rational universe, and the one valid, but not vital, objection to the religious interpretation of nature.

Since no impersonal creation can be truly worthy of a Personal Creator, creation necessarily involves the possibility of sin; for it necessitates the possibility of the individual, or the race, electing to follow the promptings of self-will in opposition to the Universal Good. It is, therefore, foolish for any one to say that the present evils of the world could have been avoided. The Creator must respect man's freedom, or else He

¹ Note C.

will, by constant and petty interferences, practically nullify it, stunt moral development, and produce the most worthless type of character conceivable—a character which is hopelessly and helplessly dependent. The problem of creation is really that of paternity. Any man, who marries and takes upon himself the duties of family life, knows that he is probably going to bring into the world beings who will certainly be morally evil (though they may ultimately through the grace of God develop unto perfection), and that nothing that he can do will avert the taint. He knows that he can do much, and it is his bounden duty to do all he can, to modify this terrible consequence of procreation by the provision of a proper education which will call forth all that is holiest and best, and repress whatsoever is unworthy, in his offspring. This is the Divine attitude towards man. It respects his freedom and recognises his right to work out his own salvation or damnation, while it provides an environment which offers every inducement to righteousness and every discouragement to vice. The world in which we live, the whole structure of human society, the effects of sin which tend to destroy their authors, all bear testimony to the Divine wrath against sin and the Divine provision of a moral education for mankind.

THE MERCY OF HUMAN SUFFERING

Chief among the redemptive and educational agencies in the universe must be ranked the great mercy of all

kinds of suffering. Suffering is the Divine appeal to all that is best and noblest in human nature. Most great sufferers would agree with an eminent Colonial statesman who wrote seven weeks after a terrible operation, "I thank God for this illness, for it has made me see things in a different light"—and would count the cost too great if they could escape the suffering at the price of what they have learned through it. The outstanding example of the blessings of suffering is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who was made "perfect through suffering." Can that be an evil to which the Ideal Man owes His development unto perfection? Is it not rather an unmixed blessing?

THE NEED FOR DIVINE SELF-REVELATION

It is evidently supremely foolish for man to try to deny to his Maker the power to reveal Himself if He desires to do so. God must be at least as potent as the creatures whom He has created; and every one of them, if he is given time and opportunity, can reveal himself to his neighbour. How much more does it follow that the Almighty Being is able to reveal Himself to His free creation! The real question therefore is not, Whether God can reveal Himself, but, Whether He has revealed Himself? The only preliminary question is whether there is any real need for such a revelation; for it is obvious that, unless there is a real and sufficient cause for such a manifestation of Divine activities, God will not exercise His power for such a purpose.

Since man is able to conceive of the Infinite, and sublime spiritual elements are inherent in his constitution, we can start in this enquiry from the fact that man is greater than his opportunities and has an infinite element in his nature. The fact that he is able to distinguish between right and wrong, and that in his best moments he is directed by his conscience (which, as we have seen, refers the quality of his actions to a mere idea) is sufficient to show that he is a being whose goal is not the grave and whose needs are not those of an animal—a warm bed and plenty of food. He is essentially a being who is made for fellowship with the Eternal, whose destiny is to know God, and therefore, if only he had not sinned, he might have expected constant fellowship with, which involves self-revelation of, the Divine; but the fact of sin has rendered it impossible for him to enjoy the fellowship of God even if a holy God could have companionship with the evil-doer; so that the legitimate question arises, How can a holy God reveal Himself to, or have companionship with, the sinner? This is the great question of questions, and, according to our conception of the sinfulness of sin and the holiness of God, will we frame our answer. It is most important to remember that any sin is an offence against the Infinite, just because man has an infinite element in his nature; and that righteousness knows no such term as forgiveness in the sense of remission; and perfect love equally knows no such thing as the slightest element of hostility towards the sinner. The problem

then is, How can a perfectly holy God come to terms with sinful humanity? As it is clear that man can never adequately satisfy the claims of the Divine righteousness, and restoration to the Divine fellowship can never come about through any work of his, the initiative must be taken by the Divine. Only by Divine Self-revelation can the possibility of restoration to the Divine fellowship be made known unto men. Only by Divine redemption is it possible for the Divine to continue holy and just, and yet to offer such restoration unto sinful man. Here, then, we find the springs of revelation—not in the justice or the holiness of God which simply involves the necessity of an eternal hell for the evil-doer, but—in the Divine love and self-sacrifice. We cannot say that God will sacrifice Himself on our behalf or that He will offer us restoration; but we cannot, and dare not, deny to Him that right and power. To do so, is to say that He cannot be as morally great, and that He cannot act as nobly as the creatures He has created. We can, as many do, sacrifice self for the sake of others; and the man who denies this power to God practically says to Him—"I am greater than Thou, for I have the capacity to produce higher moral results than Thou." Thus, the man who asserts the existence of a Divine Being and denies the possibility of Divine Self-revelation involves himself in the contradictions of belief in a Supreme Being who is hopelessly inferior in moral capacity to His own creatures. As such a position is absurd, it follows that, the helplessness

and sinfulness of man constituting an appeal to the Divine pity, the question of a Divine Self-revelation is nothing more or less than a question of evidence.

REASON AND REVELATION

It surely follows from the fact that self-sacrifice is the highest moral quality that the appeal of our weakness and helplessness to the Divine pity is so great that we may legitimately have a trembling hope of a Divine Self-revelation. The right attitude of mind, therefore, is one of reverent enquiry and readiness to enquire into the truth of alleged Divine revelation. Such an attitude of mind will assuredly not lead us very far wrong and it will prevent us being deaf to the voice of God in the event of His deigning to speak to us.

Reason has really a threefold function with regard to any revelation of personality. It should perceive the revelation, verify it, and preserve it. If I am rung up on the telephone, it is the function of reason to receive the message. If it fails to receive the revelation of the caller's personality and purpose, it fails to do its duty and I am the loser by the failure. It is not the place of reason to dictate the conditions under which the Divine Being shall reveal Himself, but to attend to His voice and to assimilate the substance of His Self-revelation. "Reason is the organ for the perception of revelation:"¹ and it is necessarily so. It is the organ by which

¹ Bishop Martenzen, "Dogmatics."

all communications from the outside world of a similar character are received, and there would be something very suspicious about an alleged revelation from any source which did not appeal to reason.

After I have received my friend's message, reason has another very important function to perform. It must verify it and show it to be authentic by comparison with what I know from other sources of the speaker's character. It can show that the internal evidence of the message is such as to accredit, or discredit, the alleged authorship ; and it can also collate the message with any other messages which have been received from the same person. The fact of the immutability of God renders this work of reason much more certain in operation than it can ever be in the case of mutable man. God may not reveal Himself completely and He may make a further advance upon a previous revelation, but the one will not be a contradiction of the other—it will simply develop, and add to, the previous revelation.

Reason has one more function with regard to an alleged revelation from any source—it is its function to preserve or to purify it as the case may need. The great function of reason, once the truth of a religion is accepted, is to preserve its purity by detecting and expelling elements which do not belong to the original revelation, and to confirm our faith by showing its inner harmonies and its rational satisfaction of our needs.

Religious truth as conceived by Christianity is, therefore, essentially a rational appeal and claims that

it is amply verified by the facts of human experience and history. If it can make good its ground, the responsibility of man is very great indeed (and it is in any case the bounden duty of man as a rational and moral being) carefully to examine the evidence in its favour. The body of this work is taken up with a statement of the special evidences in favour of the various Christian facts and an attempt to estimate their real value considered as the means of Divine Self-revelation and Redemption.

THE FULNESS OF TIME

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CHAPTER I

THE FULNESS OF TIME

THE FACT OF THE PREPARATION FOR CHRIST HAS SOME EVIDENTIAL VALUE

IF one period of the world's history—the result of many ages of historical evolution during which a Divine purpose seems to have guided the destinies of mankind—is the only period of history which is fitted for the appearance of a unique Personality; if for nigh two thousand years this Personality in the shadow of whose cross is life, cheery optimism, and the true conception of the moral value of life, has been pre-eminent in the worlds of thought and action; and, if, without this radius, despair has been exalted into a creed and life has been, and is increasingly being, regarded as devoid of all meaning—it is difficult to avoid the conclusions that there is a Divine plan in creation, which culminates in that mysterious Person, and that He is what He claims to be.

The need for an historical preparation for the advent of the Saviour is to be sought in the common fact of experience that the development of personality, and the character of a man's work, is profoundly influenced

by environment. Don John of Austria, who was as chivalrous in his ideals as he was unscrupulous in his actions, dreamed of winning a kingdom for himself by the aid of his own good sword and the devotion of a few trusty followers—as William the Conqueror had won the fair realm of England six centuries earlier—but the day for such exploits was gone, and he strove, and planned, and intrigued in the stirring times of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, only to die at the beginning of his manhood, a worn-out and disappointed man.

The enquiry as to whether there really was such a preparation—social, political and religious—for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ naturally divides into two parts: (1) Was there a Special Preparation? Was a suitable environment provided for the development of the Personality? and (2) Was there a general preparation? Were such general conditions of every kind provided as were necessary for the accomplishment of His work?

I. THE SPECIAL AND LOCAL PREPARATION

Careful reference has been made, in discussing the preparation for the Lord Jesus Christ, to the theories of the predominant school of Old Testament criticism. They do not seem seriously to affect the argument of this chapter: for the earlier portions of the Old Testament admittedly contain the folk-lore of the Israelites, and therefore their own account of themselves,

whether it be true or false, and the applicability of the predictions of the Old Testament to the Person of Christ being a question of fact cannot be affected by any theory. The cosmical conception of the Israelites—corrupt forms of which were possessed by the Babylonians and others—may be epitomised as follows:—Man was created by God in a holy but mutable state. Tempted by a subtle external agency, he sinned and thereby forfeited his fellowship with God, and spiritually died. God, in His purposes of mercy, gave the promise of a Deliverer who should be of the seed of the woman and should crush the serpent's head though it should bruise his heel. Deliverance should thus be achieved by suffering. God made preparations, from age to age, for the advent of the Suffering Redeemer. He chose a man who trusted in Him and promised him, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."¹ Abraham's younger son was of abnormal birth and was chosen as a child of promise. A further Divine choice was made of the younger of Isaac's two sons, from whose loins there sprang the fathers of a small nation which, generations after, did inherit the land which God had promised to Abraham. A tribe of this nation, and later a family of this tribe—the family of the hero-king David, on whose throne the promised Deliverer was to sit—were further designated as the tribe and family of the Redeemer.

¹ Gen. xii. 3.

The ritual and public worship of this remarkable people bore witness to the work of the Redeemer, and the prophets—whether wittingly or unwittingly is unimportant—foretold in detail His character and work. If this statement is substantially true to the facts or traditions of the Jewish history, and if the expected Messiah did appear at the crucial moment, the testimony to a Divine overruling of the affairs of men and to the Divine mission of the Fulfiller of the ideals of His race, is well-nigh indisputable. In proof that there was such a preparation we may cite, among others, the following facts: (1) The physical and geographical character of Palestine; (2) The remarkable history of the Jewish race; (3) Ethical Monotheism, the unique possession of Israel; (4) The testimony of the types; and (5) The remarkable phenomena of Messianic prophecy.

(1) THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER OF PALESTINE

Palestine Politically Geo-centric

Palestine is pre-eminently fitted to be the home of a border nation, or small nation situate on the frontiers of several large kingdoms. Such nations can only maintain their independence by the skilful manipulation of the various political forces around them. The Scandinavian countries in the North, the countries of the Balkan Peninsula in the South of Europe are good examples of modern border nations, for it is impossible to think that Germany or Russia would hesitate to

absorb the former, or that Russia or Austria-Hungary would postpone the annexation of the latter if such action were not certain to precipitate a European conflict. Once the decided predominance is obtained by one of the great kingdoms, the border nations are doomed; and annexation, or an inglorious existence as vassal States, is then their fate. Meanwhile they play no insignificant part in the political world and wield forces much disproportioned to their intrinsic strength.

The resources of nature seem to have been exhausted in making the Promised Land almost impregnable to an invading force.

“With this barrier of rough basaltic rocks to the north, the precipitous mountain walls on the east and west, and the desert on the south, Palestine was especially prepared to be the home of a peculiar people. At the same time, the great highway between the east and west passed through its centre, but so walled in that there was little temptation for an armed force to interfere with peaceable people on either side, so that, as Origen forcibly maintained, Palestine, though insignificant in itself, was so centrally situated that it was the fittest of all places for the dissemination of Christianity to the ends of the earth.”¹

Palestine was politically geo-centric in ancient times. On its north and east were the ancient empires of the Hittites, of Babylon and Assyria. Its position as a neighbouring State on the Mediterranean seaboard

¹ G. F. Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.

secured constant intercourse with the Phœnicians, the traders of ancient times. If Assyria and Egypt appealed to the sword their troops must pass near the little mountain State. If Macedonia desired to invade Egypt her troops must pass so close to Jerusalem that its inhabitants were exposed to the broadening influences of Hellenic culture. Thus, Israel was exposed to every civilising influence of the ancient world, and its people—as the prophecies of Isaiah, to whom Jehovah is Lord of the whole earth, show—were taught to think cosmically.

The smallness of the country compelled the fecund race which possessed it to seek larger borders for its sons, so that we find at Babylon, at Alexandria, at Rome, and in nearly every important town Jewish colonies, which, loyal in essentials to the faith of their fathers, were more responsive to foreign influence than the inhabitants of the mother-country, and by their unremitting testimony to the Divine unity and to the ethical and holy character of God prepared the way for the acceptance of Christianity by the Gentiles.¹

(2) THE REMARKABLE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH RACE

A further confirmation of the hypothesis that a Divine Revelation has been vouchsafed to Israel is afforded by the remarkable history of the Jewish race. Coming at

¹ Note A.

some time into Palestine—for the Israelites certainly were not the original inhabitants of the land—its ethical Monotheism gradually developed, but each advance was succeeded by a period of lassitude and decay. The history of Israel is a record of continuous fallings away, of punishments and returns to the paths of righteousness.

The struggle between Monotheism and Polytheism, which to the prophetic mind had begun in the time of Moses, was long and weary. The few who really served God proclaimed the noblest ethical teachings, and contended for the maintenance of the theocratic character of the State; but the nation which had despised the wise political warnings of the prophets to abstain from alliances with Egypt was in the end carried away to Babylon, where it remained for seventy years—an experience which cured it of its passion for idolatry. After having suffered many vicissitudes, after having endured the yoke of Persia and of Greece, and after the heroic struggles of the Maccabees for national independence, Judea passed under the Roman sway.

Meanwhile its intensely Monotheistic creed was firmly established; but the broad conceptions (the universalism, as it has been aptly called) of the prophets were lost, and the nation began more and more to regard God as the God of the nation only, and to look for a merely earthly Messiah who should restore the kingdom unto Israel.

A further tendency also became manifest—the ten-

dency, common to all nations and to all times, to ignore the ethical content of religion, to substitute hair-splitting refinements for the precepts of the law, to lay great emphasis on trifles and wholly to evade the greater spiritual duties. At the beginning of the first century of our era the nation had drunk the cup of national humiliation to the dregs. The cruel and licentious Herod sat, by the grace of the Roman tyrant, on that throne which his offspring was destined never to occupy. The nation was seething with discontent and eagerly looking for the coming of the Messiah who would rule the world in righteousness and His people with equity. In the midst of all this excitement and unrest, an event of cosmical importance took place—The Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a little country town of Judea.

(3) THE MONOTHEISTIC FAITH OF ISRAEL

It is an undeniable fact that there are only three Monotheistic religions known to history—Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Christianity. The first of these faiths owes to the two latter religions its Monotheistic conception. Thus, the most sublime of all religious conceptions originated in a small nation situate upon the border-line of the Eastern and Western nations.

Though the Romans were a race of imperialistic genius, they did not attain to this conception. The Greeks—that race of marvellous capacities, subtle and yet robust, which could produce an Aristotle, a Plato,

and a Socrates—never perceived that Monotheism could be ethical. The masses of the people were sunken in moral degradation and left by their philosophers to the worship of the numerous and licentious deities of mythology. A few of the philosophers attained to the conception of the unity of God (which attainment is ascribed by some of the early Christian fathers to an acquaintance with the religion of Israel); but even they never conceived of God as holy, as having fellowship with man, nor did they conceive of offering to Him worship and praise in the beauty of holiness. Thus, the Monotheism of Greek philosophy is a mere intellectual conceit like Eighteenth Century Deism. The purer thinkers of India conceived of God as unconscious; for Pantheism knows only a fate-god, tied and bound—a boundless ocean of unconscious thought, the waves of which, breaking upon its surface, constitute the universe; while the common people, unsatisfied by these intellectual subtleties and impelled by their heart-yearnings, made for themselves gods of many forms, oftentimes endowed with impure and abominable attributes. How can we then explain the fact that the Israelites, who were not a people of intense artistic or metaphysical genius, nor even the possessors of wide culture, were the first of the peoples of the earth to apprehend this great truth?

The failure of the great negative critic, Wellhausen, to reveal the secret of Jewish Monotheism, sufficiently shows the inadequacy of the naturalistic hypothesis;

but if the Jewish knowledge of God is part of the world-wide preparation for the universal revelation of God as infinitely holy and merciful, slow to anger and of great goodness, no further explanation is necessary.

The supreme fact of Israelitish history is its religion. God was everything to the Jew who in times of storm and stress instinctively turned to Him "who is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble"—a revelation which was begotten through suffering and formed the solace and stay of the nation of Israel.¹

(4) THE TESTIMONY OF THE TYPES

There is in existence a remarkable though very small treatise—the Epistle to the Hebrews—which works out the correspondence of the Old Testament types to their Antitype, and renders it most difficult to avoid the conclusion of a deliberate correspondence between type and Antitype.

The sin-offering and the peace-offering alike find their explanation in the work of the Saviour. Without Him they are simply inexplicable though highly interesting relics of the highest form of religious faith known to the ancient world, and must be put aside as such. If, however, they bear testimony to the ultimate revelation of God, and had at one time the more immediately

¹ Note B.

practical purpose of witnessing to the holiness of God and His wrath against sin, the system of which they form a part is worthy of a Divine Author. In what way could the wrath of God against sin be more solemnly and insistently shown than by daily sacrifices? The universal practice of sacrifice testifies to man's recognition of the fact that the righteousness of God involves the punishment of sinners. The repetition of the sacrifices showed that they in themselves were insufficient to purge the sinner, and the great annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement bore witness to the fact that the sins of the whole world would be washed away by the blood of a single and final sacrifice—that of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The ritual worship of the nation of the Jews, therefore, served the double purpose of deepening the sense of sin, and of setting forth in symbol the work of Christ, to which the prophets also bear witness, for “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

(5) THE TESTIMONY OF PROPHECY

The following canons of prophetic interpretation will help us to estimate the value of the testimony of prophecy to the Redeemer:—

(1) “The obscurity or unintelligibleness of one part of a prophecy does not, in any degree, invalidate the proof of foresight arising from the appearing completion of those other parts which are understood.

(2) "A long series of prophecy being applicable to such-and-such events, is itself a proof that it was intended of them; as the rules, by which we naturally judge and determine, in common cases parallel to this will show."¹

The fact that a satirical writing is of such a character as to be applicable to a given event would be satisfactory evidence that it was written with that intention.

(3) If it can be shown, as the modern view requires, that the prophet had in his mind other persons or events than the Messiah, or that the predictions will bear another interpretation than the Christian, the argument is not affected: for it is never given to any man to realise the full consequences, or meaning, of his own work and thought. How much less can we say that the prophet, who certainly conceived himself to be the mere messenger of the Most High God and the subject of Divine inspiration, would even expect to realise the full purport of his message!

Bishop Butler therefore very justly concludes that "the question is, whether a series of prophecy has been fulfilled, in a natural or proper, *i.e.*, in any real, sense of the words of it. For such completion is equally a proof of foresight more than human, whether the prophets are, or are not, supposed to have understood it in a different sense."¹

Two other canons of prophetic interpretation should also be borne in mind.

¹ Bishop Butler, "Analogy," Pt. II, Ch. 7.

(4) The alleged prophecy, though its application need not be previously appreciated, should be public property before the event to which it is applied comes to pass.

(5) The prophecy should not be of such a kind as to bring about its own fulfilment. There are a large number of prophecies which were public property and recognised as Messianic, long before the birth of the Lord Jesus. The burden of these prophecies being that the Messiah shall reign indeed but that He must first suffer, precludes the possibility of any tendency to bring about their own fulfilment. Many false Messiahs, no doubt, arose ; for the kingly element, if the suffering element in Messianic prophecy was ignored, tended to fulfil itself ; but the latter element, which found fulfilment in the days of our Lord's humiliation, had no such tendency.

(I) PREDICTIONS FULFILLED IN CHRIST

It would be easy to quote a large number of predictions which have been fulfilled in Christ ; for the circumstances of his life and work are foretold with a wealth of minute detail. For reasons of space we can only take two instances of such predictions from the Minor Prophets, before briefly examining the testimony of the prophecies of the Suffering Servant and of those contained in Ps. xxii.

As the family of the hero-king David was designated

as the family of the Messiah, it is not surprising that the city where David was born should be designated as the birthplace of his greater Son; but the terms in which Micah alludes to the one who is to be born at Bethlehem are most remarkable. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting."¹ One who is no mere earthly sovereign—albeit a most glorious king—for His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting, is to come forth unto God. In other words, One is to come forth from Bethlehem whose attributes are those of the Deity—for of none other than the Most High can it be said that His goings forth are from everlasting. This prophecy can as a matter of fact only be explained by referring it to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fact that countless myriads (who have probably never noticed the prophecy) have ascribed to Him essential Deity is surely *primâ facie* proof that the prophecy refers to him.

Reference has already been made to the Master's fulfilment of the types of the Levitical Priesthood; and it is important to observe that Zechariah foretells the coming of the Priest-King typified by Joshua, the then high priest, who shall unite in His single person the regal and priestly offices.² If we accept the unity of the

¹ v. 2.

² vi. 12—15.

book, the same prophet foretells the lowliness of the Priest-King and the character of His entry into His capital: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass."¹

(2) THE PROPHECY OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

The late Professor A. B. Davidson tells us that "the phrase" (the Servant of the Lord) "expresses the highest generalisation of the meaning of Israel in the religious life of mankind—Israel is the servant of Jehovah to the nations, to bring them to the knowledge of God. Scholars do not universally accept this interpretation, but they agree that the ideas expressed by the prophet in regard to the Servant have been more than verified in Christ. Of these ideas the two chief are, first, that the Servant is the missionary of Jehovah to the nations—'He bringeth forth right to the nations, that the salvation of Jehovah may be to the ends of the earth';² and second, By His sufferings He atones for the sins of the members of the people."³ The Servant is the word and spirit of Jehovah incarnated in the seed of Abraham. This incarnated word will yet redeem all

¹ ix. 9.

² Is. xlii. 1—4, xlix. 1—6, etc.

³ Is. liii. ; cf. xl.

Israel and be the light of the nations. Here again it is the Divine that saves. The word of Jehovah, the true knowledge of the true God, implanted once for all in the heart of mankind in Israel, which will accomplish that whereunto it is sent.”¹

Even if we accept this view of the original purpose of the prophecy, the fulfilment of the details in the Person and Work of the Saviour shows that such an application of its terms to the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ comes well within the scope of the Divine intention; but it seems almost inconceivable that any prophet of Israel should regard the nation which had been so constantly denounced in the name of the Lord for its idolatrous practices—and which even then (if we accept Dr. Davidson’s theory of two or more Isaiahs) was exiled on that account—as sinless, as giving its life for others, as bearing the sins of others, as prolonging its life after death and making intercession for the transgressors. The old-fashioned interpretation which conceived the prophet as looking forward to the advent of a personal Sinbearer, who should indeed be “the Divine that saves,” is justified by a more detailed consideration of the principal passage in the light of the New Testament history.

(1) The Suffering Servant is regarded as an outcast, and is described in terms of a leper. He is to cleanse many nations by being leprous in their place—“So shall He sprinkle many nations.” The Lord Jesus Christ

¹ Hastings’ “Bible Dictionary,” IV., 122—123.

was undeniably like the leper under the Mosaic law, an Outcast, and one experiencing the loss of the Divine fellowship. HE was indeed "despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."¹

(2) The work of the Suffering Servant is to be the bearing of our griefs, the carrying of our sorrows. He is to be "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities"; He is to bear "the chastisement of our peace," for "the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all," and "by His stripes we are healed." The prophecy finds a practical fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ: for the belief that He actually did bear the sufferings due to our sins, that "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him," has brought peace to the consciences of countless thousands, whose hearts have ached with the consciousness of sin. The stripes and the death of shame, wherewith the world rewarded the one Sinless Being of its history, have as a matter of fact healed myriads of souls who, enfeebled and paralysed by sinful practice, were unable to help themselves.

(3) The Suffering Servant's career is then depicted. He is to be oppressed, and to humble Himself without complaint. He is to die by oppression and under judgment for the transgressions of God's people. From His infancy, when His parents fled into Egypt to escape

¹ Is. lii. 13, liii. All the quotations are from this chapter. In connection with the whole subject of prophecy Girdlestone's "Grammar of Prophecy" ought certainly to be read.

the murderous designs of Herod, to the day of His agony on the Cross of Calvary, the Lord Jesus was oppressed, His person reviled, His claims derided, and His life spent in constant peril of violence and death. "By oppression and judgment He was taken away"; for His death was a judicial murder. Neither before the Sanhedrin nor before Pilate was He accused of any crime. The testimony of the Roman Governor was—"I find no fault in Him."¹ Yet, at the bidding of the mob, He was crucified without regard even to the forms of Jewish and Roman law.

(4) They made the grave of the Suffering Servant "with the wicked and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." They crucified the Lord Jesus between two thieves, subjecting Him to the most ignominious form of death known to man; and the same evening rich men buried Him in a new tomb, "wherein was never man yet laid."²

(5) The true cause of the Suffering Servant's death is the Lord's will, which had made "His life an offering for sin." After death, the Suffering Servant is to see to His seed, to prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord is to prosper in His hand. He is to see, and be satisfied with, the result of His life's work; by His knowledge, He is to make many righteous in the sight of God. In plain words, He is to come to life again.

¹ Lu. xxiii. 14.

² Jno. xix. 38—42.

“It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again.”¹

(6) “Therefore will I divide,” says the Lord, “the Suffering Servant’s portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bare the sin of many and maketh intercession for the transgressors.” Christ “also liveth to make intercession for us.”²

(3) THE PREDICTIONS OF PS. XXII.

The central thought of this Psalm is that of a Sinless Sufferer, who is enduring a death of shame at the hands of wicked men; but the Psalm contains none of those imprecations which, in kindred Psalms, have proved such a difficulty to many minds.³ The Sufferer has lost His sense of fellowship with God, and utters the expostulatory prayer—“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”—which our Lord adopted in His utmost agony on Calvary. Much of the Psalm is directly applied to the Lord Jesus by one or other of the New Testament writers. Thus, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes the thanksgiving, and the mockery of the priests and people is described by the evangelists in the words of the Psalm, which, being the self-told story of the

¹ Rom. viii. 34.

² Rom. viii. 34.

■ Note C.

sufferings of a Sinless One bearing the penalty of a world's sin, is, so far as it goes, worthy of its Fulfiller.

We can only take a single example of its prophecies: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a pot-sherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me. The assembly of evil-doers have enclosed me. They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me: And upon my vesture do they cast lots."¹ The first portion of these verses gives us an exact description of the sufferings of crucifixion, a mode of death unknown to the Psalmist—nor will the phraseology fit any other form of death.² The horrors of the strained posture on the cross, the sufferings of exposure to the eastern sun, the fever and excitement which accompanied the cruel torture, all find pithy and adequate expression. Not only so, but the custom which gave the garments of criminals to those soldiers who guarded the crosses of criminals is mentioned; and also that they cast lots upon the linen underrobe. The fact that the evangelists mention the reason why the soldiers did not divide that garment among them—its seamlessness preventing its division—but cast lots upon it, shows that the prophecy

¹ xxii. 14—17.

² Note D.

is not the basis of the history, but that the history was recognised to be the fulfilment of the prophecy.

How are we to account for the fact that the one place in the world which was especially fitted to be the birth-place of the universal religion was occupied by the one nation which knew the great truth of the unity of God, and which worshipped Him in unity? That this nation's very existence depended, as history shows, upon its realisation of its relationship to God? That its ritual worship can be construed—plausibly at all events—in terms of the work of the greatest religious Genius which the world has ever seen? That detailed accounts of the work of a future Sinless Sufferer who should make atonement for the sins of the whole world were published centuries beforehand, and yet exactly fit the life and work of One who has indeed proved Himself to be the “Leader of the world and of the ages to God”?¹ These things all remain an inexplicable mystery, unless God has indeed deigned to reveal Himself to man, and has prepared—as we submit that the facts cited show Him to have done—a suitable environment for that final revelation by the direct manipulation of the forces of history to the honour and glory of His name.

II. THE GENERAL AND POLITICAL PREPARATION

The great difficulty in dealing with this section of our subject is the choice of the facts. There is such a wealth of them that several volumes would be required

¹ Bousset.

for the mere enumeration of even a representative selection. Perhaps the best grouping of the few facts which we can now cite is in relation to (1) the intellectual preparation and (2) the more purely political preparation.

I. THE HELLENIC OR INTELLECTUAL PREPARATION

A border nation can only preserve its independence by the successful development of some special power. Israel, as we have seen, vindicated its right to independent existence by its religious developments, and the national resistance which the Greeks offered to Persia gave rise to that great intellectual movement which has perpetuated their name and won for them their incalculable world-influence.

The exquisite literature and profound thought of the Greeks was eminently calculated to prepare the way for the diffusion of Christianity: for the ancient faiths could not survive the pitiless criticism of Greek philosophy. This criticism, though seldom made with the express intention of destroying the popular religion, necessarily exposed its crudities and immoralities; and gradually filtered through to the very lowest strata of society, in much the same way as the influence of the German and English University sceptics has made itself felt in every class of English society and destroyed the popular faith; but, like modern Rationalism, Greek philosophy failed to satisfy the higher aspirations of mankind.

“It might fairly have been argued by the Christian apologists who were just about to arise in this society” (the society of Plutarch’s time) “that these philosophies had not shown the power of purifying the soul from its baser passions. I have above quoted a statement to show how little the sanctity of oaths was respected and what shameful demands were made from friends to support friends by their testimony. What shall we say of Plutarch’s sentiment as regards chastity? First of all he regards the adultery of a wife as an annoyance to be borne by the philosophic husband without losing his temper. . . . Nowhere, indeed, does Plutarch manifest any deep reprobation for unchastity, even when contrary to nature, if it be not a violation of other people’s rights or an excess which injures health and activity.”¹

The Greeks provided a language which became the medium for the propaganda of the new religion; for, after the conquests of Alexander, Greek thought and the Greek language became the standard and medium of art, of commerce and literature, throughout three-fourths of the known world. Every Greek colony was a centre of Greek thought and influence, and diffused Greek ideas among the neighbouring peoples, and brought them into contact with the distinctive Hellenic conceptions. These colonies—especially through the Dispersion, or foreign colonies of the Jews—exerted a profound influence on the Jewish nation. Influenced

¹ J. P. Mahaffy, *op. cit.* See Note E.

by the literary activity of the Greek peoples and the surrounding courts, and impelled by their religious necessities, the Jewish settlers of Alexandria translated the Old Testament into Greek; and by the partial assimilation of the Greek philosophies and adaptation of their philosophical terminology to religious and theological use, prepared a suitable terminology for the accurate expression of the revelation of God in Christ in a form intelligible to the ancient world.

2. THE ROMAN, AND GENERAL, PREPARATION

Christianity has spread by persuasion—not by contagion; and the use of the sword has always been inimical to its real interests. Hence that free intercommunication of thought with thought, which, before the last century, only existed in the days of the Roman Empire, was almost necessary to the success of Christianity: for provincialism, wars, and rumours of wars have always been antagonistic to the success of a persuasive propaganda. The expansion of the Roman Empire, whereby the whole civilised world passed under one government, provided the necessary political conditions for the diffusion of the religion of the Christ and the extension of the kingdom of God. The Roman peace secured freedom of intercommunication; the Roman roads, by enabling rapid transit from one part of the Empire to another, provided the means of a rapid missionary propaganda, so that Ethiopia and

Gaul, if not Britain, Babylon, and Spain, heard the first gentle whisperings of the Gospel of the grace of God before the crucifixion of Christ was a thirty years' old event.

~~III. THE CHRIST CAME AT THE CRUCIAL MOMENT~~

The final argument in support of the theory of an historical preparation for the Lord Jesus Christ is that He came at the one period of the world's history in which the external conditions were suitable for the proclamation of His creed. This will be more easily seen, if we consider what would have been the effect of His coming either a hundred years earlier or a hundred years later than He did.

He would have come, on our first supposition, into an unexpectant world. His nation would still have been in a state of semi-independence, intensely provincial and with comparatively little communication with the Gentile world. There would have been no organised Roman Empire ruling the world, but a Republic rent and torn by internal dissensions and suffering from the evil effects of barbarous civil wars. The old religions were not yet outworn, for the philosophies had not completely destroyed the popular regard for them; and the new philosophies had not yet been experimentally tried and found wanting. The Jews of the Dispersion would not have completed their work of providing a suitable terminology; and—what

is much more important—would not have effectually influenced the society around them by their witness to the unity and holy character of God. The new religion could not have thriven in such a world. It would have been stamped out by the relentless persecutions of the Gentiles as pitilessly as Romanism destroyed Spanish Protestantism in the sixteenth century. Further—and this consideration amounts to a positive proof of the teleological significance of Christianity by showing that the internal evidence, derived from the scheme of Christianity, exactly fits in with a unique external condition—Christ came to die for us. If He had come a hundred years earlier, the Roman State would have had no authority in Judæa, the world-power would have had no part in His condemnation, and the manner of His death would not have been that foretold.

If He had come a hundred years later, the consenting of the Jewish religious authorities to His death would have been impossible; for their temple was then destroyed, and their nation exiled from the land of promise. The conditions of redemption, therefore, would not have been fulfilled. A further consideration of no small importance in this respect is afforded by the fact that Christianity had only just sufficient time to get a firm hold upon the Roman Empire before the divisions and subdivisions of that state. The last determined persecution of the Christians occurred three hundred years after Christ. What would have been the result if He had come a hundred years later and

Christianity had then to endure three hundred years' persecution? It must have made its way in the dominions of two lines of jealous sovereigns. If either had accepted its yoke, the other would have strained every nerve to exterminate it in his dominions. Besides this, no time would have remained for the conquest of Rome: for "heathenism was still dominant at Rome when it had been almost suppressed in the East; and the last strong circle of heathen senators was only broken up on Alaric's capture of the city."¹

It is evident—since our barbarian forefathers were largely influenced in their acceptance of the faith by the fact that it was the religion of the Empire—that Christianity could never have triumphed under these conditions; but at the one point and moment in history where the favourable religious, intellectual, and political conditions met, the Son of Man was born at Bethlehem. Since the possibility of this being the result of chance is the wildest of mathematical improbabilities, it shows that the course of history is to an end, and establishes a strong probability in favour of the Divine authority of Christianity.

¹ Gwatkin, "Knowledge of God," II., 151.

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

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CHAPTER II

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

THE POPULAR PALESTINIAN CONCEPTION OF THE LORD JESUS

THERE can be no serious question that the Lord Jesus Christ occupied a prominent place in the public life of His time. Crowds gathered to hear His teaching, and "the common people heard Him gladly."¹ A matchless Controversialist, He easily silenced the leaders of the various parties when they tried to entangle Him in His talk; though His methods were so perfect that their own officers, on one occasion, bore testimony that "never man spake like this man."²

It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout His ministry men had been asking who He was and giving various answers — most of which related to the Messianic hopes of the age. Thus, some said that He was Elijah, the promised forerunner of the Messiah; others that He was one of the old prophets who had risen from the dead; others, including the conscience-

¹ Mk. xii. 37.

² Jno. vii. 46.

stricken Herod, who had imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist, thought that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead. The popular belief finally came to be that He was the Christ—the coming Prince who would break the Roman yoke and make Jerusalem the metropolis of the world. Hence the crowds came to meet Him on his last entry into Jerusalem and, despite the opposition of the rulers, gave Him a triumphant reception. Their political and unspiritual conception of the Messiah explains the violence of their rage against Him a week later; for a disappointed mob, which thinks that it has been deceived, is unmeasured in its thirst for vengeance; but meanwhile—strewing their garments in the way and shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord”¹—they gave Him Messianic honours.

Even His enemies were forced to admit that He was a good man. The malignity of those Pharisees who ascribed His power to Satanic agency was easily silenced by a reference to the character of His works of power.² The centurion, who besought Him to heal his servant, felt that His power was superhuman, and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”³ We must imagine, if we are to understand the significance of this speech addressed

¹ Mt. xxi. 9; Mk. xi. 9.

² Mt. xii. 24; Mk. iii. 22; Lu. xi. 15.

³ Mt. viii. 6—13.

by a Roman officer to a member of a subjugated race, a British South African saying to a Kaffir, "I am not worthy to receive you in my house." The people of Decapolis bore their testimony of His goodness, for they said, "He hath done all things well."¹ The very judges who condemned Him to death testified to His righteousness. "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death; but found none; yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is worthy of death."² The specific charges which the Saviour did not deign to answer broke down of their own weight,

¹ Mk. vii. 37.

² Mt. xxvi. 59—66.

so that the high priest was forced to deal judicially with the real issue—the Messianic claims of Christ. Thereupon Christ responded in the affirmative; for a continuance of His silence would have been tantamount to a denial of His Messianic claims. The council then condemned Him without any enquiry into the truth of those claims. Thus, even His enemies, who condemned Him of set purpose, practically admitted His personal righteousness. Nor was the result different when He was brought before the Roman Governor. To satisfy the demands of an infuriated mob, He (admittedly innocent) was crucified by a judge who protested that “I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man, touching those things whereof ye accuse Him; no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to Him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him.”¹

Yet another official bore witness to the superhuman and blameless character of Christ. The centurion, charged with the execution, who stood by the cross and saw the Saviour die; who heard the scoffs and jeers of priests and people; who saw the crucified One, racked with horrid agony, suffer uncomplainingly; who heard His words of tender compassion and saw His utter forgetfulness of self amid such sufferings as crush the bravest manhood into self-centred pity; said, on seeing this Jew crucified and slain by wicked hands

¹ Lu. xxiii. 14, 15.

give up the ghost,—“Certainly, This was a righteous Man”;¹ “Truly, this Man was the Son of God.”²

No man has yet made a profound impression upon human history—or even upon the thought of his own time—without being a remarkable man. The diminishing glass of historical perspective always reduces the reputation of a man to its legitimate proportions, so that the increase of Christ’s reputation with the passage of time shows that His greatness was underestimated, rather than overestimated by the people of His time.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD

Since a man of mean actions does not easily support great pretensions, the Lord Jesus must have been a Man of admirable character to have made such an impression upon the people of His time.

The most remarkable feature in the Gospel portraiture of Christ’s character is its perfect development and consistency. In the history of mankind we find many good and wise men, many holy lives spent in self-sacrifice, but all of them have been marred by imperfect development. Historians in their panegyrics on the life and character of some great hero betray their consciousness of his imperfection. If the Christ is above all blame, He is also beyond all praise; for the reverence and admiration, called

¹ Lu. xxiii. 47.

² Mt. xxvii. 54; Mk. xv. 39.

forth by Him, utterly transcend our powers of expression. Thus, in proportion to our sense of His goodness is our silence in the contemplation thereof. Even the noblest of the sons of men cannot endure comparison with the Son of Man. William the Silent was the noblest and most perfect of the Reformation leaders. His life was uniformly consistent and holy, and it was marked by the most passionate patriotism and self-sacrifice. Heroically he led his nation in the struggle for civil and religious liberty, and he died the death of a hero, mourned and lamented by the people whom he had freed from the thralldom of Rome and Spain. Hence he left, as his legacy to succeeding generations, one of the most perfect examples of the Christian statesman. It were invidious and unnecessary to indicate the weaknesses of that heroic character, for one single fact amply shows what an impassable gulf separates him from Christ. Nobody thinks of worshipping William the Silent ; Christ commands the devotion of countless millions. William the Silent is most justly honoured and revered as a hero and a saint ; but the consciousness that he sinned renders it impossible for us to worship him. He is *primus inter pares*, a good man among good men ; but he is a man with the limitations of fallen humanity. Christ, on the other hand, is severed from all mankind by the impassable gulf which divides innocence from guilt, and therefore He, alone among men, is a fit Object of worship.

The balance and sanity of the character of Christ is remarkable. There is no exaggeration of one trait, of one virtue, at the expense of others, and there are no theatrical exhibitions. When the leper in his loathsomeness kneeled before Him, He did not in false humility like a mediæval saint kiss his sores, nor did He abstain from ministering to his greatest need—sympathy—but “He stretched forth His hand and touched him.”¹

Nobody ever taught so clearly both by example and precept the beauty of meekness and gentleness, yet none ever exhibited greater courage and firmness. He endured gainsaying, reproach, and misrepresentation, but never returned railing for railing. When His disciples wished to call down fire from Heaven to destroy the Samaritans who refused to receive Him, they were sternly rebuked: for He “came, not to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”² But the man is a poor creature who is never stirred into righteous anger, and into severe and prompt action by baseness, especially by religious baseness; nor is the Christ deficient in this respect. When the Pharisees, in callous cruelty to a sufferer and hoping to entice Him into sin, asked Him the question, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?”³ He was angered by the hardness of the hearts which could descend to such

¹ Mt. viii. 2, 3; Mk. i. 41.

² Lu. ix. 56.

³ Mt. xii. 10.

a depth of baseness as to entice a fellow-creature to violate the law of God. He spoke with righteous wrath of the inconsistencies and hypocrisies of the popular religious leaders, and at the same time was consistently loving and merciful to the repentant sinner.

He was too perfect to look unmoved on the shameful buying and selling and money-changing (and the accompanying fraud) which were openly carried on in the Temple of God, so He made a scourge of small cords and drove forth the profaners of the sanctuary.¹

It is obvious that such a character did not lack courage; and consequently we expect to find Christ showing the courage both to do and to suffer. He went at the call of friendship to Bethany, despite the entreaties of His disciples and the peril to His life from Jewish malice,² to comfort the bereaved sisters. He evinced the high physical courage which keeps its head in, and finds a way of escape from, the midst of dangers, when the people of Nazareth went to cast Him down the hill on which their city was built, "but He, passing through the midst of them, went His way."³ It was shown when, with the full consciousness that He was going to torture and to death, He went up to Jerusalem.⁴ It was shown in Gethsemane when He went

¹ Jno. ii. 15.

² Jno. xi.

³ Lu. iv. 30.

⁴ Mt. xx. 18, 19.

forward to meet the band of officers which had come to arrest Him, and by His provision for the escape of His followers imperilled by the rash action of Peter in cutting off Malchus' ear.¹ Above all, it was shown in the dread hour of Calvary. The physical courage of Christ has never been surpassed. His moral courage is only equalled by His forbearance and gentleness. He healed the wretched servant's ear; nor was the miracle done in a haughty or ostentatious manner, but with gentle courtesy—"Suffer ye thus far"²—He drew away the bound hands from His captor's grasp, and touched the wounded ear. He uttered no word of anger on His way to the cross. Forgetful of self, His mind adverted to the long-drawn-out horrors of the coming siege, He turned to the women who followed Him and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."³ There was no formal bestowal of pardon on the executioner on His arrival at Golgotha; but His voice was heard in prayer, to Him who alone can punish or forgive, on behalf of those who nailed Him there: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."⁴ He answered not railing for railing, and did not utter a sound, save some words of comfort to His mother: "Woman, behold thy son"; and to John,

¹ Jno. xviii. 8.

² Lu. xxii. 51.

³ Lu. xxiii. 28.

⁴ Lu. xxiii. 34.

“Behold thy mother”;¹ the assurance to the penitent thief: “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise”;² until at the last the sense of His loss of fellowship with God wrung the expostulatory prayer from His tortured manhood: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”;³ soon to be followed by the glad utterances of filial faith and victory: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit”;⁴ and “It is finished.”⁵

Such a character is far too consistent to be the product of the legendary spirit. It is perfectly and proportionately developed. If we add to this the further fact that the unbelieving criticism of nineteen centuries has failed to prove a single flaw in the character of Jesus Christ, or to lay a single inconsistent action to His charge, we are forced to the conclusion that His character is as perfect as those who knew Him most intimately thought it to be.

2. THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD'S TEACHING⁶

Nobody will deny that the Lord Jesus Christ takes His place in history as incomparably the greatest religious genius of that race which is as significant for religion as the Roman for law, or the British for constitutional history.

¹ Jno. xix. 26—27.

² Lu. xxiii. 43.

³ Mk. xv. 34.

⁴ Lu. xxiii. 46.

⁵ Jno. xix. 30.

⁶ Note A.

A brief examination of His teaching will show that it is worthy of its Author.

It is strongly imaginative in character. The Lord's use of the parables and similes in which He delighted is fresh and original in the very highest degree. His parables differ from those of other teachers as the Venus of Milo differs from the rude clay images of Silenus sold in the streets of Athens, as a Sèvres vase differs from the delft sold in a penny bazaar. They are inimitable; they do not admit of paraphrase. When we try to express them in our own words, we destroy their point.

No life of Christ deserves more respectful study than Dr. Geikie's; none is more reverent and sympathetic in tone, and it assuredly does not lack literary grace; but in his versions of our Lord's sayings the bloom is rubbed off, and the whole coarsened and degraded by the unconscious elimination of the Christ-element.¹

No other teaching can compare with that of the Lord Jesus in its pregnant and perfect character. All other teachers have used many words to express their meaning where He has used few, yet none have ever made their meaning so exquisitely clear. The whole ethical teaching of the Gospel is contained in the four short pamphlets which record the Lord's life and works. The Epistles only expand their teaching. We feel, as we read them, that His teaching leaves nothing to be desired. It is so perfect as it stands that it is impossible

¹ Note B

to find any fault of expression in it, and it is so profound that no study exhausts it.¹

Another feature of the Saviour's teaching which profoundly impressed His hearers, was its authoritative character. "They were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes."² The scribes taught with all the prestige that learning and position could give them; but their teaching lacked originality and independence, and was limited on every side by tradition. They, of course, only professed to expound the Jewish law; and even in this they were hampered by the traditions wherewith they made "the word of God of none effect."³ The teaching of Christ, on the other hand, was fresh and original, without reference to the traditions of men, and it is separated from the rabbinical teaching by the impassible gulf which divides the work of genius from that of mere talent trained in an artificial and decadent school. His reassertion of the principles of the Jewish law, therefore, came as a new revelation to the people of His time, so that He was recognised as One who spoke with authority.

It should be carefully observed that Christ spoke, not merely with the secondary authority of a Divinely-inspired prophet, but with the primary authority of One who realised that He Himself was the Source of revela-

¹ Note C.

² Mt. vii. 29; Mk. i. 22.

³ Mk. vii. 13.

tion. The prophets of the Old Dispensation spoke as the messengers of God, the instruments whereby the Divine Will was pleased to reveal Itself to men, and, therefore, most appropriately prefaced their utterances with the words: "Thus saith the Lord." They, not daring to take the glory to themselves, kept the fact of their own subordination and lack of personal authority constantly before their hearers. The one case on record, in which a prophet spoke and acted in his own name, led to his exclusion from the promised land.¹ Christ, on the other hand, knowing that He was the Source of Life in Himself spoke in His own name. The style of His utterances, therefore, was unparalleled in the history of revelation, and naturally gave great offence to those who were unwilling to acquiesce in His claims. The prophets spoke as servants who carried their Master's message: Christ spoke as a Son expressing His Father's will.

We must give due weight if we are rightly to discern the reasons why His teaching made such a profound impression on the people of His time, to the inseparable connection between His Person and His teaching. The naturalistic theologians freely concede the connection in the Lord's mind between His Person and teaching, so that it may be taken as one of the fixed results of the New Testament scholarship. There is no parallel in the Old Testament to this connection between the Person and the doctrine of the Teacher. Even Moses,

¹ Num. xx.

whose utterances supply the nearest parallels to those of Christ, never identifies his person with his doctrine. If men spoke of the law of Moses, they understood the law given by Moses. The ethical and dogmatic significance of the law, as distinct from its historical import, remained unimpaired, even if his personality was destroyed; but Christ was, and conceived Himself to be, the Gospel. If He is taken away there is very little Gospel left.

3. THE LORD'S ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF

Nobody doubts that Christ thought of Himself as the Messiah in whom the long series of prophecies, extending throughout the centuries of Israelitish history, were to find fulfilment. The predictions took various—often apparently contradictory—forms. Moses speaks of Him as a Prophet and Law-Giver like unto himself. He is foretold as both Priest and Victim. He is to be a King, yet His birth is to be lowly. Sinless, He is to pay the penalty of sin. He is to die, and yet He is to prolong His days after death, and to make intercession for the transgressors. Such a series of paradoxes can scarcely find fulfilment by artificial design in any one character of history; but they form the materials for the construction of a theory of the Messiahship.

Our Lord's favourite titles were "Son of Man" and "Son of God." In the Synoptic Gospel the former is the common usage; in St. John the latter predominates.

A brief reference to the Old Testament usage of the title—"Son of Man"—will help us to fix its primary significance. It is used in the Psalms of the ideal man with whom God has fellowship. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and crownest him with glory and honour."¹ The phrase in Ezekiel constantly—and occasionally in Daniel—signifies the prophet's helplessness before God. It is obvious that both these meanings are applicable to Christ as Man. Calvary reveals Him in the weakness of humanity, and also as the only perfect example of the type of man with whom the Almighty can have fellowship.

There is, however, one passage in which it is given a specific Messianic reference:—"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a Son of man, and came unto the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."²

A comparison of its phraseology (though this is scarcely needful in view of its adoption by our Lord in His response to Caiaphas) with that of the apocalyptic

¹ viii. 4—5.

² Dan. vii. 13—14.

passages in the New Testament shows that this passage was much in the minds of our Lord and His disciples.

Dr. Stalker says that it is a synonym for "the people of the saints of the Most High,"¹ who are thrice mentioned in the interpretation of the vision which is given in the latter half of the chapter;² but the conception of the Messianic kingdom surely implies a King who, with His people, shall have rule over the whole earth. The title may, therefore, be a personal one; and, being in any case a formal and official title of the Messianic rule, it forms a most suitable designation for the Messiah.

All the diverse connections in which our Lord uses the title are filled by the Messianic interpretation. It is used to express the suffering and lowly Manhood of Christ in such passages as the Son of Man "hath not where to lay His head";³ "shall be betrayed";⁴ "must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men";⁵ for He "came to give His life a ransom for many."⁶ It is also used to express the sympathetic character of Christ's manhood in passages such as "the Son of Man came eating and drinking";⁷ and He is "not come to destroy

¹ Dan. vii. 18, 22, 25.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 55—58.

³ Mt. viii. 20; Lu. ix. 58.

⁴ Mt. xvii. 22; Mk. ix. 31.

⁵ Lu. xxiv. 7.

⁶ Mt. xx. 28; Mk. x. 45.

⁷ Mt. xi. 19; Lu. vii. 34.

men's lives but to save them."¹ It is largely used in apocalyptic passages. Thus, "the Son of Man is coming in the clouds";² "shall come in His glory";³ "shall sit on the throne of His glory";⁴ and is to be seen "sitting at the right hand of Power."⁵

Divine functions and dignity are freely predicated of the Son of Man. He "hath power on earth to forgive sins";⁶ He "is Lord even of the Sabbath day";⁷ and to speak a word against Him is a very grave, though pardonable offence.⁸ The phrase "Son of Man" was, therefore, to its User a Messianic title, and implied all the attributes, human and Divine, which appertain to the Messianic office.

This brings us to the other Self-designation of our Lord—"Son of God"—which is principally used to designate the Godward aspect of the Messianic office. The examination of Christ before the Sanhedrin shows that it was accepted both by the Lord Himself and by the high priest as synonymous with Christ.⁹ "Son of God" is therefore an official Messianic term; but to Christ it meant more than a mere official Sonship.

¹ Lu. ix. 56.

² Mk. xiii. 26.

³ Mt. xxv. 31.

⁴ Mt. xix. 28.

⁵ Mt. xxvi. 64; Mk. xiv. 62.

⁶ Mt. ix. 6; Mk. ii. 10; Lu. v. 24.

⁷ Mt. xii. 8; Lu. vi. 5; Mk. ii. 28.

⁸ Mt. xii. 32.

⁹ Mt. xxvi. 59—66.

The Sonship in His conception is unique ; it is a more than creaturely relationship to the Divine. This appears from such texts as, "Neither doth any know the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."¹ A Sonship carrying with it as its special property the sole knowledge of the Father, and having the special prerogative of revealing the Father to whom it will, cannot be anything less than a unique and more than creaturely filiation to the Divine.

This brief discussion of our Lord's Self-designation may well be summed up in the words of Professor Bruce:—

"As the Son of Man, Jesus stood in a relation of solidarity and sympathy with man. As Son of God, He stood in a similar relation to God. As bearing both titles, He was in intimate fellowship with God and man, and a link of connection between them."²

Thus, our Lord used titles which implied His absolute Divinity, though they were primarily Messianic in origin ; and claimed in pursuance of His Messianic claims Divine prerogatives such as the right to forgive sins, to revise the Mosaic law, the offices of Sovereign of the Divinely-appointed Sabbath day, and Redeemer and Judge of all men.

The consciousness of the personal character of guilt permeates the Old Testament. Its saints and sages

¹ Mt. ii. 27.

² "The Kingdom of God," p. 186.

groaned under the consciousness of their sinfulness; for they realised that each man must answer for himself. The Psalmist has most beautifully expressed the sense of both Old and New Testaments:—"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."¹ The gloom of this intense realisation of the guilt of sin is often relieved in the Old Testament by the promises of a Deliverer who is to come; but the forgiveness of sins is always regarded as a Divine prerogative. The murmurings of the Pharisees—"Who is this that speaketh blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" when Christ said to the sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee"²—show that this was the prevalent belief in our Lord's time. Our Lord, therefore, distinctly recognised, when He proceeded to prove His authority to forgive sins by curing the sinner of its consequences, that, the truth of their premise that He was mere man being admitted, their conclusion was valid. It follows that His statement "the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many"³ is tantamount to a claim to Divinity in view of the prevalent belief which He confirmed by His neglect to refute it, that none "can forgive sins but God alone."⁴

The apocalyptic statements of the Lord Jesus Christ

■ Ps. xlix. 7.

■ Mt. ix. 2; Mk. ii. 5; Lu. v. 20.

■ Mt. xx. 28; Mk. x. 45.

■ Mk. ii. 7.

give us the materials for an original and important doctrine of final judgment. God is always the Judge in the Old Testament, but in the speeches of our Lord the conception of the Father as Judge has receded into the background. The judicial authority of the Son, though always derivative, is so completely His own that His figure fills the canvas. In the *locus classicus*—St. Matthew xxv., 31-46—the Son of Man is described as coming in Divine state, attended by the holy angels, to judge the nations, and from His judgment there is no appeal. The assertion of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is to be the Judge of the quick and the dead involves (since no serious monotheist could even dream of God committing His ultimate and final judicial authority to any creature) consciousness of His Divine Sonship. Further than this, no sane man, much less a morally good man, who regarded himself as a mere man would arrogate to himself the final judgment of his fellows or even of a single individual; for man has an infinite element in his nature and is therefore too great to be adequately judged by any finite being. This inference is confirmed by the other elements which go to constitute the Lord's doctrine of final judgment. The standard of judgment is the relationship of the individual to Himself. The blessed shall be eternally rewarded, because they have treated Him as they ought, but the wicked shall go to eternal woe because they have persecuted Him. Other sayings of our Lord afford parallels to this teaching. Confession of Him before

men is laid down as the necessary condition of confession by Him before God the Father. "Everyone, therefore, who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven."¹ Such passages as this make it clear that Christ conceived Himself to be the absolute ethical ideal, the standard by which all men shall be judged; and, further, that His judgment is final, carrying with it the authority of God the Father. This has been fully recognised and duly emphasised in relation to the perfect holiness of Christ by all believing theologians, and is admitted even by the leaders of the naturalistic school.²

It is therefore evident that the Lord Jesus Christ was

- (1) A very great man,
- (2) A very good man in the opinion of those who knew him,
- (3) Regarded as superhuman by many.
- (4) In His own opinion sinless and morally perfect—an opinion which is in accordance with all the known facts.
- (5) That He believed Himself to be the only begotten Son of God, the Redeemer and Judge of all men.

The unique character of these claims needs no elucidation.

Their significance needs only to be stated in the

¹ Mt. x. 32.

² Note D.

form of a dilemma, *Aut deus aut non bonus*—either God or bad. One or other must be our judgment of Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Saviour of the human race. There is no possible middle course. If the latter be our verdict we must find some satisfactory solution for the following problems: How is it that He rather than William the Silent has been worshipped by saints of all succeeding ages? How is it that He has proved the mightiest moral force in the world's history—the greatest force that makes for righteousness?

4. NEGATIVE CRITICISM AND THE GOSPEL

Hitherto our argument has proceeded upon the assumption that the records of the life and work of the Lord Jesus which we possess are authentic. This, of course, is not universally conceded. We shall now proceed to enquire what is left to us after negative criticism has sifted the Gospel history, for it is clear that the early dates of the documents preclude the evangelistic conception of Christ (if only it is woven in the very warp and woof of the history) from being legendary.¹

¹ See Appendix I. "The Modern Criticism of the Gospels." The work of the Rev. J. Warschauer, "Jesus: Seven Questions," is an admirable case in point. Dr. Warschauer finds himself unable to accept very many of the things which have been most surely believed among us, *e.g.*, The Resurrection and the Virgin Birth—but he passionately and with pitiless criticism shows the absurdity of the denial of the sinlessness and practical Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the thesis which we have to prove is that a Christ who conceived Himself to be Divine, and was therefore either God or bad, is left us by naturalistic criticism. If we can prove this, the real objection to the historicity of the Gospels—their delineation of a Divine man—falls to the ground.

The most sustained and vigorous attack upon the historical character of the Gospel narratives which has been published in our time is Professor Schmiedel's article on the Gospels in the "Encyclopædia Biblica." He assumes that the Supernatural does not exist in the sphere of experience, and proves the untrustworthy character of the Gospels by methods which, fearlessly applied, would equally destroy the historical character of any document, person, or event. If the Gospels agree in any statement, it only proves to the good Professor that they all used the same source, and that their united testimony is really that of a single witness. If one or the other omits a statement, that statement did not belong to the original tradition, and is therefore unworthy of credence. If there is the smallest difference in detail, the documents are untrustworthy because the accounts conflict. Such treatment is sufficiently drastic to justify us in taking his residuum of trustworthy matter as the narrowest minimum to which the historical matter in the Gospels can be reduced. He allows, however, that there are "nine absolutely credible passages" in the Gospels—five about the Lord Himself and four relating to His miracles.

“These five passages, along with the four which will be spoken of in 140, might be called the foundation pillars for a truly scientific life of Jesus. Should the idea suggest itself that they have been sought out with partial intent, as proofs of the human as against the Divine character of Jesus, the fact at all events cannot be set aside that they exist in the Bible and demand our attention. In reality, however, they prove not only that in the person of Jesus we have to do with a completely human being, and that the Divine is to be sought in Him only in the form in which it is capable of being found in men; they also prove that He really did exist, and that the Gospels contain at least some absolutely trustworthy facts concerning Him.”¹

We now know where we are when the worst has happened: so that we have now, assuming that Schmiedel's result is well-founded, to fix the indemnity; and we are also in a position to construct a truly scientific life of the Lord Jesus.

As we possess nine absolutely credible passages relating to the life and work of the Lord Jesus, it follows that (1) no doctrine of the Lord's Person which does not exhaust the full meaning of the nine absolutely credible passages is a truly scientific life; and (2) that there is no reason to doubt the historical credibility (save on other than *à priori* grounds) of sayings which relate to the Person of our Lord, but do not contain a greater claim to Supernatural power or origin than is

¹ *Op. cit.* 1881.

implied by the foundation pillars. Leaving the sayings which relate to the miracles out of account, since they do not directly relate to the Person of the Lord, let us examine our foundation pillars in ascending order.

1. The first pillar is St. Mark iii. 21: "And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold upon Him; for they said, He is beside Himself." The circumstances are given by the preceding verse: "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." Our Lord had by this time excited a considerable amount of attention from all classes and hostility from some sections of the community. His relatives, thinking that He was mad to run such risks and hearing that He was again exposing Himself to danger, tried to restrain Him. Most great religious teachers have been similarly charged, by those who loved but did not understand them, at some period of their history. The passage, therefore, only shows that He was misunderstood at one time; but it affords strong evidence of the candour of the Evangelists; since nobody who wrote with the deliberate intention of glorifying another would dream of saying that His family has ever tried to restrain Him as a madman.

2. Our second foundation pillar is St. Mark xv. 14, St. Matthew xxvii. 46: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This saying, which forms one of the seven words from the cross and is part of the

expostulatory prayer of the sinless Sufferer of Psalm xxii., bears no other safe inference than that the Lord believed that He had a special fellowship with God, then broken on account of other than personal reasons, and that He, therefore (pleading for its restoration) used the language of expostulatory and liturgical prayer.

3. Our third foundation pillar is St. Mark x. 17 ff: "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good save One, that is God." The Saviour thus claims Divine goodness, for, not denying that He is good, He asks a disciple why he ascribes a Divine attribute to Him, and compels him to face the consequences of the recognition of His goodness.

4. Our fourth foundation pillar is St. Matthew xii. 31-32: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world nor in the world to come." This foundation pillar shows that a question could arise in our Lord's mind concerning the possibility of the forgiveness of a sin against Himself, and fully bears out the inference which we made from the third. He does not, unless He can be said to have done so by saying that it could be pardoned, minimise the gravity of such an offence. Is it conceivable that any

Person who regarded Himself as merely man, could think that a sin against Himself was comparable with a final sin against God? If, as we submit it must, this question is answered in the negative, the inference that the Speaker conceived Himself to be more than man is irresistible.

5. Our last foundation pillar is St. Mark xiii. 32: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The passage undoubtedly refers to the final judgment, to "the end." Our Lord assures His hearers, who apparently enquire when it will be, that the Father alone knows. The order is ascensive and important. It is not known by (1) man, nor (2) by the angels in heaven, nor (3) even by the Son, but (4) the Father alone knows. At the least, the Lord asserts His superangelic rank; but it is impossible to believe that a religious teacher who was trained in the strict Monotheism of Palestinian Judaism could conceive of Himself as holding a mediating position between God and the angels. If Schmiedel is prepared to believe this, he only furnishes another example of the marvellous credulity of unbelief. The great point for us to notice is that the Speaker refers to the Son as distinct from man and as holding a more than creaturely relationship to God.

What, then, are the results of our examination of the five "absolutely credible" passages in the Gospels which relate to the Lord Jesus Christ. They establish the following facts: (1) That the Lord was not an ordinary

man; (2) that He thought Himself to have enjoyed a practically unbroken fellowship with God; (3) that He conceived an offence against Himself to be comparable with a sin against God and, therefore, to require the assurance that it was forgiveable; (4) that He regarded Himself as good in the absolute and Divine sense of the term; and (5) that He claimed superangelic knowledge and a unique Sonship to the Divine.

The following inferences seem to be justified:—

(1) That a presumption is established in favour of the Gospels as absolutely candid and dependable documents; since they record sayings which, on account of their inherent obscurity, can only be ascribed to the Lord Himself.

(2) That no statement in the Gospels concerning Christ will, unless it exceeds the claims made by the Saviour in the foundation pillars, be rejected in the absence of objective and positive evidence to the contrary by the writer of the “truly scientific life of Jesus.”

(3) That the usage of the term, “the Son,” in the fifth foundation pillar authenticates the expression, “Son of God”; for, as we have seen, it implies a unique filial relationship.

(4) That our Lord Jesus Christ is Divine.

This scrutiny, therefore, proves that no criticism which admits the existence of any credible element in the Gospels can eliminate the Supernatural. Our enquiry leaves us face to face with the old dilemma—“either

God, or Bad." Since Schmiedel, in common with every serious student of the problem, admits "the spiritual greatness of Jesus and the imposing character of His personality," it becomes increasingly difficult to deny the Christ the Divine position and honours which He undoubtedly claimed.

THE WONDERFUL WORKS
OF GOD

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CHAPTER III

THE WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD

PLACES OF MIRACLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

AN examination of the Gospel records shows that our Lord believed in the Supernatural character of His works and thought that they afforded an important proof of His Divine claims. Thus, He ended His reply to Philip's request—"Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us"—with an appeal to His works—"Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very works' sake."¹ In His public ministry our Blessed Lord attached the same weight to the testimony of His works. For instance, His reply to the messengers of John the Baptist shows that He was willing publicly to appeal to their testimony in certain circumstances. "In that same hour He cured many of their infirmities, and plagues and evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He bestowed sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed

¹ Jno. xiv. 8—11.

is He, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.”¹ The Saviour thus shows the true function of miracle. Miracle attests the claims of the worker in a secondary way; but no miracle, as such, can demonstrate more than the wonder-working power of the worker; so that the blessing is to those who, not hesitating on account of the various speculative difficulties connected with it, accept His Person at the true valuation. He also reproached the people of His time who had seen His miracles because they rejected His claims. “Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because they repented not.”²

We are now in a position to estimate our Lord's own opinion of the evidential value of His miracles, as the character of His Person and teaching formed the highest possible testimony. He did not regard His miracles as the primary witness to His claims; and He never worked a miracle for the mere purpose of calling attention to Himself or for any other reason than moral ends. Nevertheless His miracles could not do otherwise than attract attention and witness in some sense to His Superhuman power. Thus, the Pharisees, unable to deny that He did work signs and wonders, ascribed His power to Satanic agency: “He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.”³

¹ Mt. xi. 2—6; Lu. vii. 21—23.

² Mt. xi. 20.

³ Lu. xi. 15—20.

But, as our Blessed Lord pointed out in reply, the character of His works precluded demoniac agency: "If Satan cast out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand?" It is, therefore, evident that He regarded His works as proofs that Superhuman power of a Divine character was inherent in Him; that these manifestations were sufficient within certain limits to compel belief; and that those who rejected Him after they had seen His marvellous works would receive a heavier condemnation than the cities of the plain. It is also important to observe that miracles were very rarely used, so far as we know, by the Apostolic Church for the purpose of convincing unbelievers, but only for the confirmation of believers in the faith. It could not be otherwise: for indiscriminate exercise of the power would necessarily lead to misconceptions. The people of Melita for example, when St. Paul escaped from the viper, said that he was a god.¹

Thus, the evidential value of miracles in the economy of the New Testament accords with the phraseology which is used of them. They were, in the first place, wonders (*terata*) for they were not in the ordinary course of nature; but they were also works of power (*dunameis*) which revealed the inherent, or derivatory (according to status), power of the worker; and they were in their highest evidential significance signs (*semeia*) which confirmed the faithful in their recognition of Immanuel—"God with us"—and also condemned those who saw or

¹ Acts xxviii. 6.

heard of those mighty works and yet contumaciously refused to believe.

CAN WE JETTISON THE MIRACLES?

We can now proceed to the consideration of the question which is so often asked—Can we not, without impairing the truth of Christianity, jettison the miracles in view of the unfriendliness of our times to the conception of the Supernatural manifesting Itself in the sphere of experience? We might content ourselves by pointing out that the elimination of the miracles, or physical manifestations, of the Supernatural from the pages of the New Testament would in no wise relieve the real problem—the manifestation of the Supernatural in the Sinless and Divine Person of the Saviour of Mankind—were it not that miracles are a necessary corollary of the Superhuman Person, and that their absence would, therefore, constitute an impossible strain on rational faith in Christ as the Son of God.

The Iron Duke once said that the mere presence of Napoleon on a battlefield was as good as a reinforcement of forty thousand men. In the Peninsular war the Spaniards lacked a personality to lead them, and they did badly; the British possessed a Wellington and they saved Europe. Similarly personality is an incalculable force—if not the decisive factor—in religious life. The history of the early Church groups round four names—Stephen, Philip, Peter and Paul—and to write

their history was (as St. Luke very rightly perceived) to write the history of the Church. The history of the Reformation is that of half-a-dozen great personalities. Write the lives of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, and you have very little more to record about the Continental Reformation. Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley, Parker, Laud, Cosin and Tillotson, Wesley and Whitefield, Newman and Pusey, are the religious life of the three hundred and fifty years of the Reformed Church of England. They were not necessarily the most learned men of their respective eras; Jewell was a more learned man than Parker; Ussher was infinitely more learned than Laud; Secker than Whitefield or Wesley; Dean Goode was probably more learned than either Newman or Pusey—but they were not as great personalities, and, therefore, their historical significance is immeasurably less. If it is true that the work accomplished by any man is proportionate to his personality, it would seem to be also true to say that a Superhuman Personality must manifest Itself by Superhuman acts; and therefore that if Jesus Christ is come in the flesh He will necessarily perform actions which will manifest the Supernatural in the sphere of experience.

“This power is so strongly attested throughout the first and second centuries that, in view of the spiritual greatness of Jesus and the imposing character of His Personality, it would indeed be difficult to deny it to Him.”¹ This statement refers to the miracles of

¹ Schmiedel, II., 1884.

healing; and it is significant that the same authority regards the reply of our Blessed Lord to John the Baptist when the latter questioned His Messiahship, as one of the foundation pillars for a truly scientific life of the Lord Jesus Christ; though he contends, in the interest of his naturalistic theories, that the Lord simply meant the spiritually blind, deaf, lame, and dead! But his admission that the Lord actually did work cures absolutely precludes this interpretation of the passage. If there is any meaning in language, our Blessed Lord does claim in that reply that His miracles were proofs of His Superhuman power, so that on Schmiedel's own showing we have contemporaneous evidence of the fact of miracles.

THE MIRACLES WROUGHT IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

The environment in which our Lord's miracles were wrought was charged with hostility to His Person and to His claims. For four centuries the phenomena of prophecy had ceased and the great problem, the real problem of Theism—the mystery of a silent heaven—had chilled the faith of the believing section of the community and made its heart sick with hope deferred. A pedantic scholasticism had taken the place of heart-felt religion among the better disposed religious teachers, and a chill Sadduceeism, which practically denied the existence of the Supernatural, was predominant among

the priesthood. The important negative testimony of the Jews is therefore an additional witness to the reality of the miracles. The Lord (as we have seen) admittedly claimed to, and did, work cures in public. If His miracles were fraudulent, we may well ask—How was it that the Jews did not expose the fraud? Nothing could have been more conclusive and desirable from their point of view; for if they only could have shown that He was a charlatan, there was an end of His claims; but the miracles were so well attested and public that the only possible hostile explanation was by reference to demoniac agency.¹

This finds confirmation in the fact of the most significant distribution of miracles among the four Gospels. St. Mark's Gospel, by common consent the earliest, simply teems with miracles, while St. John's Gospel, admittedly the latest, records extremely few. This is most important evidence in favour of, if it does not actually establish, the following facts: (1) The historical character of the miracles; (2) the historical character of the Gospel according to St. John; and (3) lastly, that the manufacture of miracles was not proceeding in the interval between the writing of the first and fourth Gospels. As the present writer sees no ground whatsoever for rejecting any statement of the Gospel narratives unless there are sound objective reasons for so doing, the examples adduced in the examination of the internal evidence for the historical

¹ Note A.

character of the miracles will be largely drawn from those portions of the Gospel narratives least in favour with the negative critics.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR LORD'S MIRACLES.

Our Lord's miracles are distinguished from the miracles which the early Christian and other miracle-mongers have proved their capacity to invent, in many important ways. A veil of decent reserve is always drawn over the performance of a miracle; and the whole account is too natural to be an imitation or invention. The best proof of this statement is to attempt, even with the model of the Gospels before us, to invent a miracle story.

The beginning of miracles at Cana of Galilee, where He manifested forth His glory, is a good example of the character of our Lord's miracles. The supplies of the peasant house were giving out upon the wedding day. The women who were serving hastily consulted; and Mary, the mother of the Lord, went to ask His aid—only to be rebuked. Then the Lord told the servants to fill the water pots with water, and “they filled them up to the brim.” Then He said: “Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.” When the governor tasted the water that had been made wine, he called the bridegroom and said: “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept

the good wine until now." The mother, no doubt, thought that it was a good opportunity for her Son to show forth His glory, and incidentally to do a kindness to His friends. The Son, on the other hand, refused to make a sensation at the expense of His friends' feelings, and used His power privately, as a true friend would, so that the bridegroom got the credit of providing sufficient supplies. Neither the governor of the feast, nor the bridegroom himself, knew whence the wine came. Only those whose agency was indispensable were admitted into the secret. The Divine economy and profusion of the miracle is most significant. The Lord provided an ample sufficiency; even though a year's supply was required, it was there; but He wasted none. There is no hint that all the water was turned into wine; that which was drawn out was wine, and wine of so excellent a quality that the governor of the feast wondered why it had not been set before the guests at the beginning of the feast. Besides this, there was a call upon the faith of the agents. What was the use of filling water-pots with water, when wine was needed? It was a call which demanded precisely the same kind of faith which we must exercise when we ask the Father for any gift and do not know the way in which He will answer our prayer. The same absence of ostentation marks the record of all the other miracles of our Blessed Lord. Again and again He tells the objects of His power not to make public the great things which He had done for them. It was not His will that He should receive honour from

men, and His mighty works were not done for the advancement of His cause. They were the necessary consequence of His Divine Sonship, and flowed from His sacred Personality as naturally as the Thames flows from its source amid the Cotswold Hills.

A second characteristic of the Gospel miracles is their comparative paucity. They are not scattered profusely over the pages of the histories, nor told for their own sake, nor elaborated like the stories of the miracle-mongers who wrote the Apocryphal Gospels on account of their relative marvellousness. They are comparatively few in number; and the marvel is always subordinate to the purpose of the narrative, whether it be to emphasise the Divinity of the Worker, as in the Fourth Gospel (where all the miracles recorded have a direct bearing on that subject), or, as in the Gospel according to St. Luke, to depict the Good Physician.

A third characteristic of our Lord's cures and mighty works is their certainty in action. The various "mind" and "faith" cures, of which we hear so much, differ from them in this respect. There is no reason to doubt that a proportion (perhaps 10 per cent.), of those who submit themselves to the various healers are cured; but no one can guarantee a cure. Our Lord's miracles were not a beggarly 10 per cent. of successes which may be rivalled by Christian Scientists, Faith Healers, and Patent Medicine Sellers. If they had been He could not have made the impression which He undoubtedly did make of triumph over disease and death. In the

records of His cures there is no suggestion of hesitancy on His part, nor of doubt as to whether He could cure, nor of selection of subjects for cure. So long as the moral conditions were fulfilled, it was all one to the Redeemer whether the sufferer was fevered, or deaf, or blind, or leprous. He was the Physician, not of diseases but, of disease ; and, therefore, a certainty in operation, which does not belong to the cures of any other religious leader whose mighty works are recorded by either history or tradition, marks His cures. The supreme characteristic of our Lord's miracles distinguishing them from the stories of other miracles—the fact that they are in every way worthy of a Divine Author—has been already mentioned. The stories of other miracles reveal their base origin by the character which they ascribe to their authors or by their intrinsic character. Even the worthiest of these stories ascribe the working of the miracle to some such motive as personal friendship, or even spite, on the part of the worker—sometimes to such pettiness as self-glorification or amusement. Thus, the Apocryphal Gospels tell us how the Lord threw all the clothes in a dyer's shop into one vat, and drew them out, dyed the different colours ordered ; how He struck a lad dead for knocking up against Him in the street, so that Joseph and His mother were forced to keep Him within doors on account of the misuse of His marvellous powers. Such stories as these must be classed with the stories in the Glories of Mary, which tell us how a felon, who

had never omitted to say his "Hail Mary" was held by a stone statue of the saint while on the way to execution, and so escaped the penalty of his crimes.¹ The miracles of the Gospels are of an entirely different order. They are separated from such stories by the impassable gulf which divides truth from falsehood. They are worthy of Divine power. They are not worked by the arbitrary will of a mere sinner, whether a God or a man. They are certain in their action, and depend for their occasion upon moral conditions—upon faith in the power and still more in the character of the Worker. Moreover, the moral reference implied in the demand of a moral condition on the part of the beneficiaries finds its complement in the moral content of the miracles. The miracles of the Lord possessed a moral content just because they were the outward and visible signs to the believer that he had not believed in vain and that the Redeemer was able to help men in their need. Sometimes, they had a direct moral message. In one case, the Lord uses a miracle to show the people that He was the Forgiver of sins; because by remitting the penalty of sin by the removal of physical disease which is the outward fruit of sin He showed that He had power over the dread spiritual disease which is its ultimate cause.²

Another characteristic of the Gospel miracles is the character of the miracle-Worker; for "the spiritual

¹ St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *op. cit.*

² Mt. ix. 2—8; Mk. ii. 3—12; Lu. v. 18—26.

greatness of Jesus and the imposing character of His personality ”¹ form no mean assurance of the truth of the miracle narratives. We are not asked to believe that A., B., or C., performed those marvellous acts in his own name ; but that the greatest religious Genius of history on the very meanest showing—and, as we have seen, the noblest Character of history, who believed Himself to be the Son of God—performed marvellous acts of power. How is it, assuming that these stories are of legendary origin, that they are of a piece in their moral significance with the sinless character of the Saviour of Mankind ?

We have already mentioned that the documents which record these miracles are of extremely early date and perhaps incorporate documents of still earlier times. We need here only briefly point out the significance of this fact for our enquiry—it does not allow sufficient time for the legends to develop, and therefore precludes the possibility of a fabulous origin for the stories. We are, therefore, left with a dilemma : either these stories are true or else they are invented. If we prefer the second horn of the dilemma, we can only save reason by showing who could have invented them. The early Christians did not ; they had not sufficient literary capacity. Even St. Luke, the ablest of them from the purely literary point of view, lacked imagination. Hence the question remains—Who invented the miracles of the Gospel ? Any literary man would be glad to father

¹ Schmiedel, as already quoted.

them ; the only difficulty remaining is to find a novelist of sufficient capacity.

THE WITNESS OF THE MIRACLES TO CHRIST

Now that the general historical character of the miracle-stories has been established, we can proceed to classify the miracles, and to estimate the value of their testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. They may conveniently be grouped in five classes: (1) Miracles of Healing; (2) Surgical Miracles; (3) Exorcism of Demons; (4) Coincidence Miracles; and (5) "Nature" Miracles.

The Miracles of Healing include almost the whole range of human ills. This is in accordance with the presupposition of Christ's Divinity. He could not be among men without healing their diseases and alleviating their sufferings so far as they permitted Him; for God, if He reveals Himself in history, will surely be at least as beneficent in His operation of mercy as experience shows Him to have been in creation. Among the miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels are the cure of fevers, of a woman with an issue of blood, of a woman with an infirmity, of dropsy, palsy, blindness, deafness and dumbness, and also the cleansing of several lepers. Thus, almost the whole round of human diseases are included in the cures accomplished by the Lord. At His mere bidding, disease disappeared, and the sufferer was restored to full normal health and strength without passing through the weary stages of convalescence.

Now, this is exactly what we would expect if God cured a sufferer by the word of His power. Indeed, if it operated by any other means, we would be inclined to suspect the intervention of some agency. Nowhere is the Superhuman power of the Master more clearly manifested than in the cleansing of lepers. Leprosy is the most horrible disease which a human being can contract, and so contagious that the unhappy sufferer is excluded from all social life—nay more, he is driven forth from the bosom of his family. He is socially, and in every other way, without the camp. He is dead to all intents and purposes; so that it is not surprising that this terrible disease—which is indeed a living death so far as human society is concerned—should have been commonly regarded as a type of sin, which is also a living death in the Biblical conception, because it involves separation from the Divine fellowship. Thus, the Psalmist refers to the ceremonial purification of the leper when he pleads for cleansing from soul-guiltiness: “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”¹ Similarly, the great prophecy of the suffering Servant of Jehovah is conceived in terms of a leper.² Thus, it is most appropriate and even necessary to the delineation of the Personality of the Worker in His works of power that He should be the Cleanser of the leper. In the first great cure—when the leper came and kneeled down before Him, saying, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst

■ li. 7.

■ Is. liii.

make me clean"—the Lord revealed Himself and reassured the leper (who recognised His power but doubted His will to help) by stretching out His hand and touching him, saying, "I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy departed from him."¹ But the Lord, living under the Mosaic law, did not needlessly violate that law. In the case which we have just cited, it was necessary to reassure the sufferer by a practical manifestation of sympathy and fellowship; but always to have touched the leper would have rather savoured of the unhealthy sentimentalism of the mediæval saint than of the sane caution of the true philanthropist. Thus, when the ten lepers cried out, "Thou Son of David have mercy upon us," the Lord simply sent them to the priest, "and as they went their leprosy departed from them."² A most significant thing in both cases, for it precludes the possibility of legend, is that the Lord sent the lepers to the priest so that the Divine Law might be fulfilled. If the stories were post-resurrection in origin, after the Mosaic law was more or less abrogated, it is not conceivable that the Lord would have been delineated as punctiliously careful in providing for the fulfilment of the ceremonial law.

There is only one possible conclusion as to the significance of the miracles of healing. They represent the Lord as all-powerful and acting with due reference to moral freedom, and as abolishing disease and restoring to perfect health by His mere word those who

¹ Mt. viii. 2—4.

² Lu. xvii. 14.

were dead already so far as society and the Mosaic law were concerned.

There is only one surgical miracle recorded in the Gospels. It is the incident of the healing of Malchus' ear, recorded by St. Luke, the medical scientist of the early Church. Legend would have secured the normal character of the conditions ; but this is the only miracle which was not in response to the prayer of faith. The ill-advised action of St. Peter in trying to defend his Master by the sword, rendered it imperative that the occasion thereby given to His enemies to say that He resisted the emissaries of the law by force, should be taken away ; besides which the escape of the disciples after the attempt at armed resistance is only explicable by the occurrence of some such event as the miracle recorded. The revelation of the character of the Lord in this incident is very beautiful. He showed a delicate courtesy in His words to His captors—"Suffer ye thus far"—as He drew away His bound hands to perform the miracle ; and His action in touching Malchus' ear revealed His sympathy for His persecutors even in those sufferings which directly resulted from their hostility to His Person. Since accidents, unlike disease, are not associated with sin in Holy Scripture, the significance of the surgical miracle, considered as a revelation of Christ's Person, is that it manifests His power to counteract the blundering of men.

The most real difficulty connected with our Lord's miracles is related to the exorcism of demons. As the

reality of demoniac possession is most hotly contested, it may be well to mention some facts of primary importance in this connection. In the first place, the belief is common in most parts of the world. It is found in China, India, and South America. The forms may vary considerably, but the underlying principle is the same—that a demon, or superhuman spirit, can in certain cases obtain control of the human organism so as to direct its actions and speech. The admission of Huxley in his great controversy with Dean Wace that there is no scientific reason whatsoever which precludes the possibility of possession (though he denied the existence of any scientific evidence in support of the belief) entirely destroys the *à priori* objection to the reality of the phenomenon, and narrows the whole issue to a question of evidence. Now, there is at our disposal a very important class of evidence—the ascertained phenomena of Spiritualism. The testimony of such men as Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, Dr. A. R. Wallace, and Professor Barrett, all of whom are Fellows of the Royal Society—not to mention that of the late F. W. Myers, or of the eminent French astronomer M. Camille Flammarion, or of the late eminent Italian criminologist M. Cesare Lombroso—puts the possibility of delusion as to the phenomena, whatever the true explanation may be, out of court. These phenomena are extremely like those of demoniac possession. There is the same peculiar mentality, the same liability to trance, the same abnormal strength in many cases, and the same

puerility of the supposed communication. Thus, the day is not yet come (for, while the Spiritualist case is an open question, the question of demoniac possession must remain an open question for the scientist) when we can unhesitatingly reject the New Testament accounts of demoniac possession. If, however, demoniac possession is a fact, we would expect the Lord of Glory to vindicate His superiority to the demons. Now the stories of demoniac possession which are mentioned in the New Testament have a verisimilitude of their own. They are related in as matter of fact a way as any other part of the narrative. No love of the marvellous for its own sake is shown, and the attitude of the Lord is an excellent guarantee of the truth of the narratives. He wholly refuses to receive testimony from them and silences them. He casts them forth by the word of His power. The story of the demoniac of Gadara is so often quoted that it will be well to point out the real significance of the miracle and of the permission to the demons to go into the swine. Huxley is perfectly right in his contention that the Lord had no moral right to send the demons into the swine on the assumption that the Lord was mere man; but even Huxley could not say that the Creator might not dispose as He saw fit of what He had made. Thus, his whole argument is the merest begging of the question, an argument in a circle, and wholly irrelevant so long as the question at issue is either the character of the action, or the trustworthiness of the Gospel

narratives, because based upon the assumption that the fundamental hypothesis of the Gospel narrative is incorrect.¹ The Lord, therefore, revealed His power as the Disposer of all, whether of the destiny of demons or of human possessions, in the much-abused miracle of the Gadarene demoniac.

The "Coincidence" miracles are those miracles which manifest supernormal knowledge. The miraculous draughts of fishes, the seeing of Nathanael under the fig-tree, the knowledge that a man would be carrying a pitcher of water—that is, doing woman's work—and of the ass and colt being tied as the triumphal entry and Last Supper approached, and the stater in the fish's mouth, are the principal examples of this class of miracle. The latter is a very good example for us to take. The collectors of the Temple-tax asked Peter whether the Lord would pay His quota or not, and were assured that He would. On Peter's arrival at the house, the Lord asked him whether earthly kings taxed their own sons, and pointed out that He was not liable for the same reason to the Temple-tax. However, He would pay the tax for expediency's sake. So He sent Peter to catch a fish, in whose mouth a stater would be found which would discharge both His tax liability and Peter's.² This miracle is simply one of foreknowledge, and reveals the Lord in the Divine aspect of having filial

¹ See Wace, "Christianity and Agnosticism" and Huxley, "Science and Christian Tradition."

² Mt. xvii. 27.

rights in His Father's house, and as asserting those rights by acting upon the principle that "the silver and the gold are Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills," though normally dependent upon human effort during His earthly pilgrimage.

The "Nature" miracles include those miracles which cannot be satisfactorily classed under any of the preceding heads: such as the turning of the water into wine, the miracles of the loaves and fishes, the cursing of the fig-tree, and the raising of the dead. In view of the tendency among those who deny the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ to admit the performance of mighty works by great personalities, and therefore by Him, this class of miracles will probably be extremely important in the near future, and perhaps will be the centre of the controversy; for it is most unlikely that the historical character of these miracles can ever be admitted by those who reject the Divinity of the Lord, involving as they do a modification of the ordinary course of nature only possible to the Divine Being. It may be well, in view of the unique character of these miracles, to work out the internal attestations of the narratives by taking an example of each kind of nature miracle; and we shall, in view of the fact that the battle still rages over the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, take (whenever possible) our illustrations from it so as to deal with the weakest portion of the evidence at our disposal.

There are, first of all, what we may call the creative

miracles—the turning of the water into wine at Cana of Galilee,¹ and the two miracles of the loaves and fishes. That of the Feeding of the Five Thousand is recorded in all the four Gospels,² and is implied by the discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, whether we regard that discourse as a free invention of the Evangelist or as a true and veritable discourse of our Blessed Lord. The internal attestation of the miracle story is as strong as the external. The perplexity and remonstrances of the disciples when the Saviour suggests feeding the great multitude, though no previous provision has been made, is very evident. Philip protests that two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient. Andrew, seeing his Lord's evident desire to provide for its wants, makes the feeble suggestion: "There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?" Then the Lord manifests His power as Creator by feeding the assembled multitude with the prodigality and economy of nature. There is so much more provided than they can eat that much is left over; but the Lord permits no waste—"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost"—and they gather up twelve basketsful. Thackeray remarks upon the marvellous consistency of Swift's description of Gulliver; but the fidelity of Swift is nothing in

¹ See p. 116, *ante*.

² Mt. xiv. 13—21; Mk. vi. 32—44; Lu. ix. 10—17; Jno. vi. 1—14.

comparison to that of the inventive capacity of the four Evangelists on the assumption that this record is not true.

Another class of Nature miracles is composed of those miracles which reveal Christ as the God immanent in nature, Who controls its forces by His will. It includes such miracles as the calming of the storm on Lake Galilee, and the Lord walking upon the sea.

The next division of the Nature miracles is composed of the miracles of resurrection. They are three in number—the raising of Jairus' daughter,¹ of the widow of Nain's son,² and of Lazarus.³ The latter is one of the most fiercely contested incidents of the Gospel history; but the attack very largely rests upon the perilous argument from the silence of the other Gospels. As a single fact destroys a host of inferences, and as such a discussion does not come within the scope of this work, we do not propose to discuss the objections, but will content ourselves with an examination of the internal evidence, which should enable us to decide whether belief in this crowning miracle is rational faith or mere superstition. Lazarus of Bethany was sick; and his sisters, Mary and Martha, sent to the Lord, saying: "He whom Thou lovest is sick." The Lord abode two days in the place where He was, and then

¹ Mk. v. 21—43; Mt. ix. 18—26; Lu. viii. 41—56.

² Lu. vii. 11—17.

³ Jno. xi. See Burkitt's "Gospel History and its Transmission for the Negative Criticism."

set out for Bethany, despite the protests of His disciples who knew that the Jews wished to kill Him. On His arrival He learned that Lazarus was already dead four days. Martha came to meet Him, and said: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that, even now, whatsoever Thou shalt ask of God, God will give it to Thee." The Saviour then promised that her brother should rise again; and as she thought that He referred to the Last Day, He assured her that He was the Resurrection and the Life. Even then she did not apprehend the truth; but went and called Mary, who also met the Lord with the same half-reproachful plaint. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit (*enebrimēsato tōi pneumati*) and was troubled (*etaraxen*), and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord come and see. Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold how He loved him. And some of them said, Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this man also should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself (*enebrimōmenos en heautoi*) cometh to the grave. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away

the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always; but, because of the multitude which standeth around, I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me. And, when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go." Would the half-hoping, half-despairing tone of the sisters' plaint ever have been invented? Would legend distinguish the bursts of sorrow with such fine psychological analysis? Legend would surely have depicted the Saviour as hastening to the rescue, not as waiting two days before He started; as telling the sisters without any of the preparation, which gives such a realistic tone to the story, that He was about to raise their brother; and as going in the full consciousness of power, not as a broken-down Mourner; as rejoicing in anticipation of what He was about to do, not as sobbing in sympathy with the bereaved. Nor would a legend manifest the Divine economy of power which is written upon every line of the narrative. The friends must take away the stone and loose Lazarus from his cements, since those operations did not necessitate Divine agency. How could legend put the words into the mouth of the sister—"Lord, by this time, he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days"? The Synoptists

record the other miracles of resurrection, which reveal One who is, in His own Person, the Life-giver, and by His personal authority raises the dead ; that is, One to whom the Divine function of Life-giving appertains of right.

There is one Divine prerogative which we have not yet seen our Lord directly exercise. The Giver of life has the prerogative of destroying it ; so that the mighty works (unless they included such a miracle) would not completely reveal the Divine Person. There is only one case on record in which the Lord exercised this prerogative ; for the purpose of His coming was to save—not to destroy—men's lives. When He cursed the fig-tree because it bore no fruit when it ought to have had an early crop, the fig-tree withered away. There is the same absence of the sensational element which we have observed in the other miracle records. The life goes out of the fig-tree ; and by evening, when He is returning, the leaves are so withered under the heat of the fierce Eastern sun that the disciples remark on the quickness with which it has withered away. This miracle is perfectly within the rights of Deity, but not of mere man ; for all property is held subject to the will of Him who is the Giver of all.

THE MIRACLES FORM A SYSTEM ; THEY REVEAL CHRIST AS GOD

What, then, is the picture of the Miracle-worker as outlined by His works of power ? He is the Healer of

disease, at Whose word disease disappears, Whose word and touch heal the leper, Who cures surgical cases by His touch, to Whom the very demons were subject ; the "Coincidence" miracles reveal Him as Providence, as the Possessor of Nature ; the "Nature" miracles reveal Him as Creator, as immanent, as Life-giver and Destroyer. The picture is in all respects coherent ; it is that of a Divine Man, who only uses His power for moral ends, and finds the occasions for such use in the needs of suffering and sinful humanity. Thus, He stands revealed as the Son of God, as God of God, as Light of Light, as Very God of Very God.

This momentous revelation of the Christ by the system of the miracles is not the conscious purpose of the Evangelists. They simply record the facts, and only a critical study of the four separate Gospels reveals the vast significance of the miracles as a system. The Gospels merely contain the materials for the systematic revelation of the person of Christ through His works of power—just as the Bible contains the materials for the systematised theology which should be the intellectual study and delight of every believing soul ; but in neither case is the whole system on the surface, or even revealed through one writer, though the full and grand significance of both miracles and doctrines cannot be grasped, unless we take the trouble to master the underlying system.

BORN OF A PURE VIRGIN

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CHAPTER IV

BORN OF A PURE VIRGIN

MODERN SCHOLARSHIP AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH

No part of the Gospel history has been subjected of late years to such fierce attacks as the records of the Birth of the Lord Jesus. Some even of those who believe in His Deity, look with no friendly eye upon the fact of the Virgin Birth ; but a review of the names of those who are best known among the negative critics of the fact gives us the not-surprising result that they are mainly unbelievers in any manifestation of the Supernatural in the sphere of experience. The cause which numbers among its adherents such scholars as Drs. Moule, Bernard, Fairbairn, Knowling, J. H. Kennedy, Orr, Denney, Theodor Zahn, Gore, Sanday, Lukyn Williams, and many others, can afford to treat with contempt the charge of unscholarliness, so often made by the baser sort of writer and lecturer, save in so far as it shows that its authors put themselves out of court by their use of such methods of controversy.

I. THE ALLEGED VETO OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION

A reason, which has induced many persons to look with disfavour upon the fact of the Virgin Birth and to

prejudge the controversy, is the belief that the doctrine is not original, and that it is a mere importation from Jewish or pagan sources. Thus, we are sometimes told that the new science of comparative religion relegates the story to the limbo of mythology. Pfleiderer,¹ for example, proves to his own satisfaction that the Virgin Birth belongs to the same category as the incarnation-myths which are almost universally diffused; but he fails to perceive that there is an essential difference between incarnation and the method of incarnation—for the Virgin Birth is merely the method of incarnation—and that no existing story of incarnation really constitutes a parallel to the Virgin Birth. Besides this, he would have to show that the story was accessible to the Palestinian Jews of the first century; for, as we shall see further on, the Birth stories of the Gospels were independent in origin and originated in Palestine. In any case, we are safe in saying that no Virgin Birth, save that of the Lord, is to be found in the records of history or mythology. There are stories of incarnations innumerable (which bear testimony to the universality of the idea of incarnation and of the possible fellowship between God and man which would result from it), but the means by which such incarnations were accomplished are as degrading as might be expected from the pagan conceptions of God. They are uniformly the cohabitation of the human and the divine, the latter usually taking the form of a man or an animal to make

¹ "Early Christian Conceptions of Christ."

the process possible. Hence the idea of Virgin Birth is entirely absent. Even the story of the Buddha, whose mother is supposed to have been living separately from her husband according to the post-Christian mythology, may be cited in illustration of this; for, before his birth, his mother dreamed that she saw the Buddha entering her side in the form of a six-tusked white elephant.¹

Besides this, there can be no parallel between the doctrine of incarnation which conceives of God as One and those which think of many Gods; for the former is an incarnation of the Infinite, the latter merely of the finite; the one brings together beings who differ in kind, the other merely those who differ in degree. In any case, the attitude of the early Christians towards Paganism renders any borrowing on their part from such sources in the highest degree unlikely: for they regarded the Pagan gods as those powers of the air against whom St. Paul warns us that our warfare is to be waged, and of whose tables we cannot eat, if we would be partakers of the table of the Lord.²

The only remaining source from which the legend might have arisen is Jewish; but,

“It is futile to say that belief in the Virgin Birth is due to Jewish ideas, while at the same time the one Old

¹ “So far as earlier pre-Christian writings are concerned, we find no mention in some of them either of mother or birth.” “Knowling,” *op. cit.*, pp. 50—56.

² Note A.

Testament text that looks in that direction¹ is denied. If that passage is not used in support of the doctrine, then there is no Old Testament anticipation whatsoever, and certainly nothing in Jewish literature of the time of Christ to account for the doctrine."²

Either this passage does refer to the birth of the Messiah, or it does not. If it does, an unimpeachable witness to the truth of this belief is added to the testimony at our disposal ; if it does not, we are absolutely left without a source from which the belief could arise. The absolute originality of the belief therefore precludes for all practical purposes the possibility of legend.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPTION OF THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH

The Old Testament conception of the Messiah has a direct bearing on the controversy, for it conditioned the whole thought of the circles which produced the New Testament. The Messiah is pictured in it as the triumphant King who is to rule His people with righteousness and the nations with equity ; as the Priest who will offer satisfaction to God for the sins of the people ; and as a Sinless Sufferer whose sufferings are substitutionary. More than this, Divine functions, attributes, and titles, such as those of Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace³ are freely used of Him. Thus, even, as

¹ Is. vii. 14.

² Griffith-Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³ Is. ix. 6.

we have already seen, the Divine attribute of everlasting existence is ascribed to the Messiah by the prophet Micah.¹ What origin does the Old Testament ascribe to the mysterious Being whom it thus depicts? In point of human origin, He is to be of the seed of Abraham and of the royal house of David; nevertheless, His origin is to be as mysterious as His Personality. The great classic of substitution, which co-ordinates the labour and suffering of the Messiah, suggests the mysterious origin implied by the whole conception: "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground."²

The protevangeliū contains the same idea so explicitly that it is difficult not to see the correspondence of the Virgin Birth to the underlying idea of the first Gospel. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."³ The significance of the passage becomes apparent when we remark the unusual phrase, "the Seed of the woman," and the fact that no promise is made to Adam that his seed shall bruise the serpent. His share in the final victory is entirely secondary (which absolutely reverses all ancient ideas as to the relative position of the sexes) for the final victory is to be attained by "her Seed." Now, a woman has no seed in the strict sense of the term—for the male is the fertilising agency. To speak,

¹ Mic. v. 2.

² Is. liii.

³ Gen. iii. 15.

therefore, in the ordinary course of events, of the seed of the woman is a misuse of language unparalleled (save in passages which relate to the Lord Jesus Christ) in the Bible, which uniformly speaks of "the seed" and "the fruit of the womb" respectively, when referring to the generative functions of the sexes. Hence, the phrase, "her Seed" excludes male agency and implies a supernatural origin for the mighty Seed which is to bruise the serpent's head.

The doctrine also accords well with the various miraculous and remarkable births which are recorded in the Old Testament. These had accustomed the intelligent reader of the Old Testament Scriptures to regard remarkable phenomena in connection with the births of great personalities as not impossible, provided that such personalities were intimately related to the covenant hopes of the nation. Thus Isaac, the child of promise, who was born after the covenant between Abraham and his Lord, was born out of due time; and the birth of Samuel, the great prophetic figure of early Israelitish history, was the direct result of prayer. It is most important to notice that the remarkable births of the Old Testament are very few; and that they in no wise form parallels to the Virgin Birth, since none of them dispense with the agency of the human father.

The only other passage which need detain us is the fiercely controverted Isaianic prophecy, "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name

Immanuel.”¹ The context shows that the prophet was declaring the punishment which was to come upon Israel, as a result of the triple alliance between Judah, Israel, and Syria, against Assyria; but the character of the prophecy shows that the incident is not a mere note of time. The child is to be called Immanuel—a name significant as according with the highest Messianic hopes of Israel. Besides, it is hard to see what sign—and it is given as a sign—a maiden’s bearing a child in the ordinary course of nature could possibly be to anyone, and the Septuagint, which so often softens down the miraculous in deference to Greek prejudice, translates the indeterminate “maiden” by the determinate “virgin.” Hence the simplest solution of the difficulty seems to be the acceptance of the traditional view that in the Old Testament conception (which none of the Jews understood), the Messiah, who is the Seed of the woman is to be born of a pure virgin. If this interpretation is correct, the Old Testament portraiture is not made appreciably more marvellous than it is already—it is only completed by the indication of the method of the appearance of the Messiah in history. It is here important to remark that the later Jews did not, and do not, conceive of the prophecy as Messianic, and that the conception of the Virgin Birth, apart from the prophecies of Isaiah, has no place in their literature. Hence it cannot be said that the Virgin Birth is an invention of the pious

¹ Is. vii 14.

imagination for the purpose of fulfilling prophecy. It is much nearer the truth to say that the Virgin Birth of Christ gives their significance to, and proves the existence of, the prophecies implicit in the Old Testament, because it fits the language used, and co-ordinates the indications ; just as the fact that a key fits the wards of a lock shows that it was made to fit that, or an identically similar, lock.

III. THE DIRECT EVIDENCE FOR THE VIRGIN BIRTH

The first line of evidence in favour of the fact of the Virgin Birth is provided by the character of the Gospel narratives. The following facts, among others, deserve attention.

Their early dates (and the conceded authorship of the Third Gospel) renders it in the highest degree unlikely that these stories were the objects of the slightest suspicion in Apostolic days. The date of these documents is now practically admitted to be that which tradition had assigned to them ; so that it would be, if the ordinary experience of mankind is to be trusted, almost impossible for the stories to have a legendary origin—especially when we consider the wide apparent differences and real agreement between the accounts as given by St. Matthew and St. Luke. Besides this, the concessions of Harnack as to the authorship of the Gospels guarantee the adequacy of the authors' opportunities for obtaining information. Hence we have at the outset of the enquiry two facts which form a strong presumption

that the accounts are trustworthy—that is, the responsibility and sincerity of the witnesses, and the early dates of the documents. Nothing is more striking to an unprejudiced reader than the candour and lack of exaggeration which mark the documents. There is nothing of that theatrical element which betrays the hand of the legend maker in the Apocryphal Gospels. The Child works no miracles; and the miraculous element is not very large. Indeed, if we put aside the conception itself, there is very little which can be called miraculous. The dreams and angelic appearances—even that of the heavenly choir—being of the nature of theophanies, are, strictly speaking, not miraculous, so that the strictly miraculous element is confined to the temporary dumbness of Zacharias, the birth of John the Baptist, that of the Lord, and the Star of Bethlehem. Thus, the smallness of the miraculous element reveals the fundamental difference of the story from the accounts which the early Christians succeeded in inventing.

There can be no possible doubt that St. Matthew and St. Luke record two absolutely independent accounts. The discrepancies are so apparent (though they disappear on critical examination) that they are constantly assigned as reasons for rejecting the historicity of the accounts.

The second line of evidence is that which is given by St. Matthew. He undoubtedly intends to tell St. Joseph's story, and he is the evangelist whom we would expect to record it, for he was a tax-gatherer from

Capernaum, and must have had excellent opportunities of hearing what Joseph had to say upon the matter. His business—certainly not one which induces a blind credulity in human nature—made him a well-known man in the district. He was also, as the character of his Gospel shows, a Jew whose conception of the Messiah was primarily Jewish. There can be no question that the Lord was legally the child of Joseph, for He was born in wedlock, and, therefore, his legal Heir, and through him of David.¹ A most significant thing is that the Evangelist records that the normal explanation—to those who live in a sinful world—of the Virgin's pregnancy occurred to Joseph, and the behaviour which is attributed to him is what we should expect from a just and upright man.² The marriage was to be broken off as privily as possible for the sake of the girl. Surely it is in accordance with what we know of human nature that a Divine intervention would be required to induce Joseph to proceed with the marriage. The coming of the wise men to the cradle of the King ought not to occasion any difficulty, in view of the statement of Tacitus that there was at that time an expectation throughout the whole of the East of the coming of some Great One; and the murder of the Innocents by King Herod is in exact accordance with what we know from other sources of his crafty and cruel nature. The flight into Egypt, where there was an immense Jewish colony

¹ Note B.

² Note C.

outside Herod's jurisdiction, is also what we would expect—for Egypt offered a safe and easily reached asylum. The home at Nazareth, rather than in the dominions of the crafty and cruel Herod Archelaus, is also consistent with what we should expect in the circumstances.

Our next witness is the record contained in the early chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, which are certainly intended to represent Mary's account. They begin with the account of the unexpected birth of John the Baptist and the accompanying phenomena. The exquisite reserve of the story is impressive. The account is as matter of fact as such a document could well be. It being the wife's account, there is naturally no hint that Joseph ever doubted. The question asked by the Virgin is the natural question in the circumstances, and the answer is too sublime for human invention. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee."¹ Then Mary goes down to stay with her cousin Elisabeth for three months. After her marriage comes the famous census, which Sir William Ramsay has shown to be a confirmation of the historical character of St. Luke's account,² and they go to Bethlehem, the city of David, where the Saviour is born.

We must now see how far the testimony of these independent witnesses agrees, for their agreement forms a very substantial guarantee of trustworthiness.

¹ i. 35.

² *Op. cit.*

Professor Orr has noticed no less than twelve points of agreement which contain the gist of the story,¹ but there is a far more important kind of agreement than any mere agreement in details. The deeper and underlying agreement which the essential coherency of the accounts reveals turns the divergence in matters of detail into a most valuable proof of absolute trustworthiness, for it is obvious that two entirely independent legends will not coalesce—no matter what ingenuity may be devoted to the hopeless task. The great question, therefore, is whether there is a real agreement between the writers. Are their accounts coherent? Can they be worked into a unity? We may pass over the precarious argument from silence, merely remarking that it is only cogent when it can be shown that the events recorded by one author alone cannot be fitted into the general scheme of events. It should also be remarked that, as is usual with ancient historians, the indications of time are very slight; but we shall not assume anything for which there does not appear to be good evidence in the text.

The course of events would appear to have been as follows:—The angel appears to the betrothed of Joseph and tells her of the high honour in store for her. She then goes down to Judæa to stay with Elisabeth. She returns to Nazareth after three months, and her advancing pregnancy begins to excite remark. Joseph, a just and merciful man, decides to break off the engagement as privately as possible, but is prevented by his

¹ Note D.

dream. He, therefore, hastens on the marriage and gives the girl the protection of his name. The necessity of going to Bethlehem for the census gave him the opportunity of leaving Nazareth, which was now an unpleasant place of residence for both of them. Immediately on their arrival at Bethlehem, the Child is born and the shepherds adore Him. We have an indication of time in the Gospel according to St. Matthew which justifies us in the assumption that the Holy Family stayed for a considerable time at Bethlehem, where a stay of some duration might be expected on account of Mary's health. Herod sent to slay all the young children "from two years old and under according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men." This would place the visit of the wise men at any time within two years of the birth of Christ. The flight into Egypt was no slight undertaking for a young mother and child, and could not have been successfully accomplished within a few days of birth. The return from Egypt, in obedience to the promptings of a dream, after two years had passed by, would find the Holy Family inclined to settle at Bethlehem; but the danger from the reigning Herod and the jealousy which might call attention to the birth of the Saviour within the prescribed period would naturally induce Joseph to settle in the Galilean city, where he had friends—especially as the unpleasant talk would have died away during their prolonged absence.

It may be said that this is hypothesis, but the real question is whether it fits the facts. No liberty has

been taken with them ; nothing has been done save the necessary work of reconciling two independent witnesses. In doing this we have acted upon the sound historical principle that, if any other hypothesis is possible, conflict between candid witnesses is not to be assumed. This procedure has, we believe, given us a satisfactory account of the phenomena. St. Matthew was in a position to know Joseph's story, and any thoughtful Jew would want to know it before he accepted the Man Christ Jesus as the Christ of God. St. Luke was, according to Sir William Ramsay, a first-class historian. He certainly had excellent opportunities of knowing what he was writing about, and he would naturally be the more interested in Mary's account. The occurrence of marvels need not surprise us if we allow the truth of the Incarnation ; and a good many would be required to satisfy Joseph that he was not deceived in his belief that the Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost—for the horror with which orthodox Jews of our Lord's time would regard such a story is inconceivable to us, it being in their eyes incompatible with the unity of the Godhead.

IV. THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

We must now consider the objection which arises from the supposed silence of the other New Testament writers in regard to the Virgin Birth. It is useless to insist that the other Evangelists and New Testament writers did not believe in the Virgin Birth simply

because they do not mention it, unless it can be shown that their purpose would have been served by its mention. If this can be shown, the argument from their silence becomes weighty and pressing; though, even then, it would not be conclusive. We will, therefore, ask—though the burden of proof really rests upon the other side—whether the various writers whose works are preserved in the New Testament had any occasion to serve by alluding to the Virgin Birth.

Here we may point out how slight the primary evidential value of the Virgin Birth is. The fact is necessary, as we shall see later on, to account for certain facts connected with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as such has a real evidential value; but—unless we are convinced of the sincerity of the witnesses, and also of the truth of the fact which it explains—the Virgin Birth has extremely little evidential value, inasmuch as it entirely rests upon the honour of a single woman, and in the nature of things cannot be supported by any direct evidence. The reason, therefore, is obvious why the Apostles do not adduce it as a proof of the Lord's Divine mission. Again, unlike the Resurrection and Crucifixion, it is not the basis of any important Christian doctrine, though it is the corollary of the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is only the way in which the Incarnation was achieved, and as such it is not likely that anybody would think of adducing it for doctrinal purposes.

We might also point out that there is no question

that the Christian churches have taught this fact throughout the centuries ; and yet it is no exaggeration to say that it was scarcely mentioned in the pulpit until the attacks of unbelief forced the teachers of the Word to vindicate its truth. We may give an example of its place in theology to-day, when the battle rages most fiercely around it. Principal Fairbairn, whose belief in the fact is well known, could write his greatest work without ever finding it necessary to refer to the Virgin Birth. Its importance is solely evidential in a secondary sense ; for it is not a proof by which an infidel would be converted, but only one which affords a sufficient explanation of the method of the Incarnation.

These considerations sufficiently explain the silence of the Epistles, but that of the Second and Fourth Gospels is of graver importance. The plan of these works, however, throws a flood of light upon this difficulty. Each of the Evangelists wrote his Gospel from his own standpoint. Thus, St. Matthew writes about the Messiah of Israel ; St. Mark writes a short, plain account of the ministry of the Lord ; St. Luke attempts the task of writing the history of the Lord Jesus Christ in its cosmopolitan aspect ; and St. John is solely concerned with the illustration of His Divinity. Hence, it is easy to see why the writer of the Fourth Gospel did not trouble to record the birth and childhood of the Redeemer. They could not prove Him Divine, and could only divert attention from the real issue. They did not reveal Him in His Divine relationships. Besides

this, the purpose of the Gospel is obviously supplementary, and there can be no question on any hypothesis that the writer had ample opportunities of knowing what the others had written : for St. John was the last of the Evangelists. To say, therefore, that the writer of the Fourth Gospel does not mention the Virgin Birth is not to say that he did not know about it.

“ Whether the Gospels be read as a Divine revelation, or as merely human records, the fact is clear that Mary’s First-born was not her husband’s Child. And this was known not only to the circle of Nazareth, but to the leaders of the Jews. Hence their contemptuous rejoinder when the Lord denied that they were true sons of Abraham. ‘ *We be not born of fornication,*’ they exclaimed.”¹

Since St. John knew this, he must have believed that the Lord was either one of those who were not permitted inside the Tabernacle by Divine Law, or else that He was born of a pure Virgin. As it is utterly inconceivable that a Jew could have accepted a bastard as the Messiah in face of the written law of God, we are driven to the conclusion that St. John believed in the Virgin Birth.

But there is another Evangelist who makes no mention of the Virgin Birth. St. Mark’s Gospel begins with the ministry of John the Baptist, and gives us our fullest account of the Lord’s actions during his ministry. His design is to picture the Strong Son of God, and he does not devote his space to the delineation of the weakness of the Infant Lord. The Evangelists in question

¹ Sir Robert Anderson, “ The New Apostacy.”

carefully abstain from countenancing the thought of the human paternity of their Lord, so that there is no historical evidence whatsoever for the fact that He had a human father. If they had known, as they must have known, of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, and had any reason to disbelieve its truth, or knew of the human paternity of the Lord, they were so criminally negligent and uncandid in writing biographies of the Lord, and never contradicting the fables which were being added to the God-given Gospel, that their historical trustworthiness is destroyed. Thus, we are driven to the conclusion that both these Evangelists believed in the Virgin Birth, but did not regard it as coming within the scope of their writings. This is also true of St. Paul, whose attitude upon the matter we are about to investigate; for we may dismiss without examination the silence of the other writers whose works are included in the New Testament Canon, on the ground that we do not possess sufficient data to enable us to judge the full extent of their beliefs.

The testimony of St. Paul would have been final, if he had given a decided opinion; but his silence, as we have seen, is of very little importance, unless it can be shown that the adducing of the Virgin Birth would have been of controversial or didactic value to him. Besides this, there is every reason to think that St. Paul both knew of, and believed in, the Virgin Birth of Christ. He was several times at Jerusalem at the time when the supposed legend was developing.

He must, therefore, have known of its existence; and his silence regarding it is inexplicable in one who was so tenacious of the purity of the faith. Besides this, St. Luke was his constant companion and friend, who idolised him, and wrote the history of the early churches very largely in terms of his life. Hence we are confronted with a dilemma—either St. Paul believed in the fact, or St. Luke differed from him on a matter of the very gravest importance. If we accept the latter hypothesis, we must account for St. Paul's silence on the matter; how the Evangelist came to believe in the Virgin Birth, and when the evidence which convinced him became available.

If these considerations stood alone, they would make it imperative for us to regard the Virgin Birth as an article of the Pauline creed; but, besides these, all the positive indications, and allusions to the beginning of the Saviour's manhood, in the Epistles of St. Paul support this view. The doctrine of the Second Adam implies a new physical start for the new humanity; and there are one or two passages which seem to point in the same direction. The most important of these is "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."¹ Here, once again, we are brought face to face with the problem of the association of the Redeemer with birth through a

¹ Gal. iv. 4. See note E.

woman without any mention of a male. The phrase will not bear reference to a merely natural birth ; for, in that case, there is no way of accounting for the constant exclusion of the male element from participation in the human parentage of the Messiah. The Christ is never described by St. Paul as the Seed of a man, save in so far as He was a member of the nation and of the royal house of David. God sends forth His own Son, born of a woman.

“Why does St. Paul here only mention the mother, when it is plain that it was much more decisive for the subjection of Jesus to the Mosaic law, to which the context refers, that He should have been born and grown up the Son of an Israelitish man? Plainly because, in the thought of St. Paul, there was no room for Joseph as the father of Jesus beside His heavenly Father.”¹

The argument from silence, therefore, is hopelessly precarious in view of the facts that the scope of the two silent Gospels leaves no room for the mention of the Virgin Birth ; that St. John knew that the Lord was not the Son of Joseph ; that neither St. Mark nor St. John ever give the slightest hint that the Saviour had a human father ; that St. Paul uses language which excludes human paternity ; and that, in a word, the New Testament knows no other fact to account for the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ than that “He was conceived by the Holy Ghost.”

¹ Zahn, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

V. THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

After all, the ultimate question which will decide our acceptance or rejection of this doctrine will be determined by its sufficiency or otherwise as an explanation of the origin of the Redeemer.

In the first place, it is very difficult to regard the Sinless Personality as having its origin in a corrupted stock. Evolution, if it has any message for the race, teaches the impossibility of return to, after departure from, the true line of development. Once an organism has left the true line of development, it may develop laterally but it can never develop vertically; it can never attain to the top of the evolutionary tree; it can never bring forth the perfection of physical nature. Thus, the denial of the manifestation of the Supernatural in the physical sphere—the real point at issue with those who reject the Virgin Birth—disproves the truth of evolution by showing that a corrupt tree has brought forth good fruit; for Jesus of Nazareth, our Lord and Master, is undoubtedly good fruit for any stock to produce.¹ Hence the Virgin Birth is of evidential significance in so far as it shows the means of the Divine intervention, and thereby affords a sufficient explanation of the origin of the Sinless Christ. It is a method, and explains how the Sinless Man came into being. If He were true Man, it is obvious that He must come of the corrupted stock. If He was to be Sinless

¹ Note F.

Man, Divine intervention was necessary to enable Him to start upon His probation, free from human corruption. As Son of a woman, the Saviour was true Man; and the Virgin Birth obviated the taint of sin by bringing a new element into the formation of His humanity. A healthy human organism will inhale, and destroy by its inherent vitality, innumerable disease germs which would inevitably destroy a delicate organism. Similarly, seed which was morally and spiritually corrupt would be unable to resist the evil influences of the corrupted mother—as a matter of fact, experience shows that by selection we can intensify moral tendencies in a race (racial tendencies sufficiently prove this), and that healthy moral organisms may, and do, throw off evil hereditary influences—but the untainted, God-created Seed would assimilate the humanity of the mother, while destroying the taint by virtue of its inherent purity and strength; just as the healthy man will assimilate the oxygen in the air while rejecting and destroying the impurities which he necessarily breathes in.

Further, the Ideal Manhood finds a satisfactory origin in the Virgin Birth, for it implies a manifestation of the Supernatural in the sphere of experience. The Saviour is the only Person who can possibly be accepted as the Ideal of humanity, because He alone has attained perfection through enduring the discipline of struggle and sorrow. In the Biblical conception, His Ideal Manhood is not merely accidental and open to challenge—

it is essential and Personal. He is the Head of a new humanity which is to attain perfection of manhood through participation in His life. Thus, St. Paul describes Him as the Second Adam ; that is, as holding the same relation to the new humanity as the first Adam did to the old. He is its *Fons et Origo*. The first man sinned ; and by his sin death entered into the world ; the tainted race was unable to throw off the shackles of sin, and was helpless in face of its approaching doom. But “ the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” This He could only do by constituting Himself its Federal Head, whose life and work should undo for those who identified themselves with Him the bonds of sin and death which the race had forged. Hence, He must necessarily be connected with the race and have a human parentage, or else He would have no point of contact, save that of sympathy, with the erring race. As the further question—How could One, born in the ordinary course of nature, and, therefore, simply a Member of the guilty race from the point of view of His origin, be regarded as the Ideal Man ?—arises, we are under the necessity of postulating a Supernatural Birth as the explanation of the Ideal Manhood of the Redeemer, and of the position, which history must assign to Him, as the Head of that new race which, with all its errors and failures, has found in Him both inspiration and power to press on unto perfection. The Virgin Birth, it may be fairly argued, is consonant with the fact of the Lord’s Ideal Manhood

as taught in Holy Scripture and verified by experience, and affords a rational explanation of what must otherwise be an unintelligible mystery.

The fact of the Virgin Birth also accords with the fact of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament conception and in that of the Christian Churches, He is the Word, "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made; Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven." Hence we are face to face with the problem of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of the Infinite God. Is it conceivable that That should come about in the ordinary course of nature? Even in the case of the finite gods of polytheism, the mind of man has always required a manifestation of the supernatural in the physical sphere as a sign, or sacrament, of Incarnation. Much more is this necessary if the Eternal God should deign to become incarnate. Hence the Virgin Birth, or some such manifestation of the Supernatural in the physical sphere, is in accordance with the presuppositions of the Incarnation.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

What, then, is the result of the enquiry? We have seen that the Virgin Birth cannot be successfully attacked from the standpoint of comparative religion, because there is no parallel to it in the annals of

mythology, and because it is a uniquely Christian conception and fact. The Old Testament conception of the Messiah throws considerable light upon the doctrine (though it cannot account for it) because it conceives of the mysterious Sufferer of the first promise as "the Seed of the woman"—a phrase which, to say the least, discourages the idea of human paternity. It would, indeed, be scarcely too much to say that the fact is adumbrated in the Old Testament; for we have seen how much there is in it which is in agreement with the thought of a miraculous birth. The early date and the internal characteristics of the Gospel narratives form a strong guarantee of accuracy; the character of St. Matthew's story makes it almost certain that he records the story of Joseph; and that of St. Luke that he records Mary's account. More than this, we have noticed the entirely different standpoints of the writers, resulting in apparently grave discrepancies which, however, disappear on a critical examination; we have also seen that the accounts are supplementary and dovetail into one another—a most important fact, for the consistency of two apparently hostile witnesses with each other forms a practical guarantee of the accuracy of both stories. We have seen that the primary evidential and doctrinal value of the Virgin Birth is so slight that the silence of the other New Testament writers is only natural in the circumstances; but that there is, nevertheless, ample reason to think that St. John, St. Mark, and St. Paul—and therefore the whole Apostolic circle—

believed in the Virgin Birth of Christ; and that, if its members did not, their credit as historical writers and guardians of the deposit of truth is destroyed. We have also seen that the Virgin Birth affords a sufficient explanation of the way in which the Sinless Personality of Him Who is the Ideal Man, in Whom mankind has taken a fresh start, and Who is "the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End," came into being; and that it, therefore, has a very real, albeit secondary, evidential value.

Hence we are justified in saying that the Virgin Birth is attested by the maximum amount of historical and doctrinal evidence possible in the circumstances, and that it is as well proven as any event in ancient history.

It only remains for us to point out that it is impossible to eliminate the Supernatural from the Birth of the Lord Jesus and to reduce it under natural laws. If the Divinity of the Lord Jesus is granted, it is impossible to deny the operation of the Supernatural in the Incarnation. If it is denied, we have still the Sinless Person to explain: so that, even if we reject the Virgin Birth, we have not eliminated Supernatural activity from the production of the Personality of the Redeemer—we have only disposed of the means whereby that Sinlessness was rendered possible: but it is a fact, and we are therefore shut up to the choice between the untrustworthiness of the law of cause and effect and Divine intervention in some other form which has not been revealed to man.

WHOM GOD HATH RAISED UP

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CHAPTER V

WHOM GOD HATH RAISED UP

THE RESURRECTION THE CITADEL OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

THE whole credit of Christianity has, as a matter of history, depended throughout the centuries upon the moral miracle of the Person of Christ, and upon the physical miracles which it implies. The Apostles adduced the Resurrection from the latter class as the great and crowning proof of the Divine mission of Him whom they worshipped; for this was a thing about which they could not easily be deceived, or deceive others. It is but lost labour, therefore, to contend—in view of the place which the physical resurrection holds in the Apostolic community—that a Christianity which denies the reality of this fundamental manifestation of the Supernatural in the sphere of experience has any historical warrant, or can ever satisfy the needs of the human soul. Its organisms may, perhaps, drag out a brief and inglorious existence; but its life-giving force is gone, and such an emasculated creed can never be potent in the history of the world.

The direct evidence for the Resurrection of the Lord

Jesus Christ is of necessity confined to those who were previously believers in His Messianic claims—with the significant exceptions of St. James and St. Paul; for He could only have revealed Himself in one of two ways—in the form of His humiliation or in that of His risen glory—either of which would have caused the streets of Jerusalem to run with blood, and so defeated the object of His mission. If He had chosen the former method, is it conceivable that the Chief Priests and Rulers who had delivered Him for envy, would have owned Him without a struggle?¹ It is certain that, if He had manifested Himself to the priests and people, the attempt to destroy Him would have been renewed. This would have left two courses of action open to the Lord. One would have been to vanish; in which case the cry of illusion would have been raised, and the Resurrection finally discredited. The other would have been armed resistance; in which case His few followers must either have been reinforced by Supernatural power, or have fallen in a hopeless conflict with overwhelming odds. The same objection, from a slightly different point of view, rendered it impossible for the Saviour to reveal Himself in His risen glory. If the people had once realised that He had risen from the dead, and that He was the long-expected Messiah, the material character of the Jewish conception of the Messianic rule must have led to a fierce and wild rising against the Roman rule; and the religion of Christ

¹ Note A.

must have become a merely national religion, and been involved in a life and death struggle with the mightiest empire which the world has ever seen. Thus, Christianity must have become a religion of the sword, and could never have been that religion of persuasion which has destroyed the empires of force, cemented by blood, with the solvents of love and self-sacrifice.

The historical testimony for the fact of the physical resurrection is thus necessarily confined, with the significant exceptions which we have already mentioned, to the disciples of our Blessed Lord. Such evidence must be scrutinised all the more closely on account of the extraordinary nature of the fact alleged. The consistency of the accounts, the character of the facts which emerge in the course of our enquiry and their coherence with the Personality of Him who rose from the dead, form the most significant points for enquiry.

I. THE APPEARANCES OF THE RISEN LORD AND THEIR WITNESSES

The difficulties which arise from the extreme compression of the records and the entirely different viewpoints of the stories recorded by the Evangelists, make the reconstruction of the Resurrection history no easy task. Nevertheless, since it is improbable that the details of several free inventions, or independent legends, should be capable of reconciliation, they establish the entire independence of the accounts and constitute a valuable guarantee of their trustworthiness.

The Body was taken down from the cross after the death of the Lord Jesus and the piercing of His side by the spear, and was given to Joseph of Arimathæa, who wrapped it in the linen clothes and spices which Nicodemus had provided and laid it in his own new rock-hewn tomb. The Chief Priests and Pharisees, with Pilate's permission, posted a guard at the tomb for the purpose of arresting the Lord on His resurrection, and sealed the tomb. Meanwhile the women of the Apostolic company, naturally desiring to do something themselves for their beloved Dead, prepared to perform the last offices for the dead and bought spices.

THE EASTER MORNING APPEARANCES

The Sabbath passed and the first day of the week dawned. The women went down to the tomb to see the Body and perform the last offices of love. They found the stone rolled away, and the terror-stricken guards leaving their posts. The angel, whose appearance was that of a young man, told them that they need not fear for the Lord was risen, and that they were to tell the disciples that "He goeth before you into Galilee."¹ The terrified women hurried away and told no man anything.² Mary Magdalene, however, ran to Peter

¹ Mt. xxviii. 1—10; Mk. xvi. 1—8; Lu. xxiv. 1—12; Jno. xx. 1—10.

² Mk. *in loc.*

and John, and said : “ They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid Him.”¹ The two Apostles ran down to the tomb, and “ the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre,” where he waited until his senior arrived and entered the tomb. After they had entered the tomb and seen the clothes lying and the napkin in a place by itself—evidence which convinced St. John but which only perplexed St. Peter—they returned to the city.

“ But Mary stood by the tomb weeping ; and as she wept, she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. When she had thus said, she turned herself back and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto Him, in Hebrew, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not ; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father ; but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God. Mary Magdalene cometh

¹ Jno. xx. 2.

and telleth the disciples I have seen the Lord; and how that He had said these things unto her.”¹

On her way she met the other women who had been with her at first, when the angel had given them the, as yet, undelivered, message to the disciples. She told them of her blessed experience; and they went with her to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard. As they went, the Lord met them, saying “All hail. And they came and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not; go, tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.”² Thus Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the risen Lord.

She saw Him by the tomb and twice heard his well-known tones before the Apostles—with the possible exception of St. John—knew that He had risen from the dead. The internal evidence of the account justifies faith in the characters of the witness and the narrative. There was no thought of His resurrection in her mind when the Lord came up behind her, and she saw Him through her tears. She was as matter of fact and as sceptical as any of the unbelievers of history; for she supposed Him to be the gardener and said, “Sir, if Thou hast borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Then the Lord revealed His identity by His intonation of her name; and she at last perceived that the Crucified of Friday was the risen Lord of Sunday.

¹ Jno. xx. 11—18.

² Mt. xxviii. 18—10.

“How truth-like again in every detail ; the submissive sadness of the appeal, and, on the other hand, the blind energy of love, which undertakes, in the exhaustion of grief, to do the work of a strong man, removing and burying the body.”¹

THE OTHER EASTER DAY APPEARANCES

The women told the disciples that the Lord was risen, and that they were to go to Galilee where they would see Him; but “their words seemed to the disciples as idle tales.” It was contrary to experience that a man should rise from the dead, and that sufficed the disciples. The Lord could not have risen. But the women persisted in their story; Peter and John talked over the extraordinary state of things at the tomb; and we may reasonably assume that John expressed his belief that the Lord was indeed risen. Then the Lord appeared to Simon² first of all the Apostles, as was natural and right; for he was chief of the Apostolic band. He had been the first to confess the Christ, and he had also denied Him. Of what was said at that meeting nothing has been told us, save that the denier was vouchsafed the first vision of the Risen Lord—probably in fulfilment of the Lord’s prayer “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” History tells us

¹ Bishop H. C. G. Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

² Lu. xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5.

how St. Peter obeyed this command.¹ The disciple who had cursed his Saviour for fear of the Jews was the Apostle of the Circumcision. The disciple who had sinned most deeply, was the leader of his Saviour's forces through good report and evil; and began his special work of strengthening his brethren immediately he had seen the risen Lord—for the only Gospel record of this appearance narrates how the Apostles met the disciples who had come in from Emmaus to tell their wondrous story, with the salutation—"The Lord hath risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon."² These accounts show the slowness of St. Peter to believe in the Resurrection. Evidence which was sufficient to convince St. John only made him wonder, and the words of the women seemed to him as idle tales. It was not until he saw, that he believed.

Two of the disciples were going out to Emmaus,³ and talking over in deep depression the things which had happened at Jerusalem. A Man came up from behind and joined Himself to them. "But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. And He said unto them, What communications are these that ye have one with another as ye walk? And they stood still looking sad." This Stranger had come up and joined them uninvited, and now He had begun to pry into their sacred grief. They stopped to think what

¹ Lu. xxii. 32.

² Lu. xxiv. 34.

³ Lu. xxiv. 13—35.

they should say; but, His face showing sympathy, Cleopas said with lingering irritation, "Dost Thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said, What things? And they said unto Him, The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people; and how the Chief Priests and our Rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel. Yea, and beside all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. Moreover, certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the tomb, and found it even as the women had said: but Him they saw not." The note of despairing sorrow is predominant in this account. The love of the disciples was as strong as ever; but their faith in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah had evidently died—for they spoke of Him without using an honorific title. They then told this Stranger, who was so kind and sympathetic, of the mysteries of the day. Then the Stranger showed them the reason of the sufferings of Christ as given in the Old Testament. They arrived at Emmaus, and He made as though He would go on further. But, their hearts warmed with the realisation that, even

though their Messiah was dead, they had not believed in vain, they constrained Him, saying—"Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread and blessed it, and brake and distributed the bread." Those who had lived with Him could not now fail to recognise Him. "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight." The same Lord, yet no longer the same; for having passed through death unto life and made a way of access unto God, the disciples must now learn that His risen and ascended life necessarily modified the old, familiar, personal relationships. "They said one unto another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened unto us the Scriptures?" All was now clear to them and they hastened back to Jerusalem to tell the wondrous news of a risen Lord. The Apostles greeted them on their arrival with the glad assurance that "the Lord is risen indeed," and they began to tell their wondrous experience.

"And as they thus spake He Himself stood in the midst of them and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit."¹ The disciples, not understanding that the risen Lord was free from the limitations of His humiliation, were terrified by His

¹ Lu. xxiv. 36—49; Jno. xx. 19—23.

appearance in the barred and bolted room. Then the Lord reassured them, "Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do questionings arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I Myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? and they gave Him a piece of broiled fish. And He took it and did eat before them." Then He explained the testimony of the Scriptures to Himself, and gave them the ministerial commission which was afterwards given in Galilee to the whole body of the disciples.

The witness of Cleopas is interesting because it is the witness of one who had ceased to believe in the Messianic mission of the Lord; who, in common with his unnamed companion, talked with Him for at least an hour; and who, even then, only recognised Him by His familiar gestures in the breaking of bread. The witness of the Apostles as a body is that of men of varied ranks of life who were all agreed in love of the Dead, and in unexpectancy of the Resurrection even after the tomb was known to be empty. They were men who had all to lose and nothing to gain by the Resurrection; for, as long as they did not attract public attention, nobody would have troubled them. The account of the Lord's appearance in their midst, their fear that He was a spirit, their disbelief even after they

had handled Him and their final reassurance by His eating with them, form guarantees of their sanity and unexpectancy, and therefore of their undeniable competency as witnesses.

THE SIXTH APPEARANCE

For some unexplained reason, Thomas was not with the disciples on that first Lord's day. On his return the disciples told him the glad tidings, but Thomas would not believe.¹ "Except I put my fingers into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side I will not believe." His character was faithful and tenacious, but so slow to apprehend new and unusual truths that his unbelief caused a postponement of the journey of the disciples to Galilee for a week. Once again they were assembled in the room and Thomas with them. "Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and My God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed: Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed." Is it likely that this confession—the fullest recognition of the dignity of Christ recorded in the Gospels—should be ascribed by legend to a minor character in the

¹ Jno. xx. 24—29.

Apostolic band, or that the stern rebuke to Thomas should find its source in myth ?

These appearances were all necessitated by the disciples' unbelief. Their rejection of the story of the women suffices to explain the apparent discrepancy between the account in St. Matthew's Gospel which only records the appearance to the women in Jerusalem and the official manifestation in Galilee, and St. Luke's account which only narrates the Jerusalem appearances. It is easy to see why this was the case. The writers, limited by considerations of space, would naturally act upon the principle of selection of sufficient evidence to prove the case, and would give the preference to that part of the evidence which they considered most valuable.

THE GALILEAN MANIFESTATIONS

We can now proceed to a review of the two Galilean appearances. There is considerable uncertainty as to their order. On the whole, for reasons which will afterwards be given, we incline to think that the appearance by the lake-side was preceded by the great official manifestation on the Galilean mount.

After the second Lord's day, the disciples went to Galilee where they summoned the followers of the Lord to the appointed trysting place.¹ In twos and threes they arrived at the Mount. They saw a Figure

¹ Mt. xxviii.

of ineffable glory approaching them. They fell down and worshipped Him ; but the question—Can this really be the Lord Jesus whom we knew ?—came to the minds of some. Those disciples who had been present at the Transfiguration were able to dispel those doubts by explaining that this same glorious Person, crowned as Sovereign of the universe, had been seen by them on that occasion. As they—some five hundred in number—worshipped, the Saviour's well-remembered tone uttered the solemn words of that sacred commission which has echoed throughout the ages—"All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth, go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The mention of those who doubted is no mean evidence of the Evangelist's good faith, and the coherence of the story with that of the Transfiguration (with which the Evangelist does not connect it) is also important. The allusion of St. Paul to the number who saw the Lord on this occasion—"above five hundred at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some have fallen asleep"—is of very great importance. Large numbers of men are not easily deceived at the same time by an illusion both visual and aural.

The disciples were now exhausted by the terrific strain of the preceding weeks, and urgently needed rest.

This was now possible, for the short forty days which separated the Ascension from the Resurrection were little more than half-exhausted. The disciples had tarried eight days in Jerusalem, the journey to Galilee would have taken six more at a liberal estimate, and the secret summoning of the disciples would take a week or a fortnight. This would fix the date of the official manifestation of the risen Lord at the twentieth or twenty-sixth day after the Resurrection. It is not unreasonable to think that the Lord told the disciples to rest awhile at their own homes—before they went to Jerusalem for the final manifestation; and we may in any case reasonably assume that the disciples whose homes were on the lake-side spent a few days in Galilee before returning to Jerusalem.

Seven of them went out for a night's fishing.¹ They toiled all night and caught nothing. As morning broke, they saw a Man standing on the shore. He asked them—"Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast, therefore, wondering who He was, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked) and he cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits)

¹ Jno. xxi.

dragging the net full of fishes. So when they got out upon the land they saw a fire of coals there and fish thereon and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken. Simon Peter, therefore, went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three, and for all there were so many the net was not rent." The impulsive Peter on realising that the Lord was near—a fact which was first perceived by St. John, the man of quick spiritual perceptions—forgot his earthly duties and hastened to his Master's side. Thus, the Lord was revealed to the disciples (this third time¹ that He revealed Himself to them as such), as the same Lord who had thought of their needs during His lifetime. The enumeration of the number of fishes caught, the faithful delineation of Peter's character as shown by his plunging into the sea forgetful of the good gifts which the Lord had just given him, the characteristic action of the Lord in sending him back to help the others in landing the catch, the threefold question—"Simon son of Jonas lovest thou Me?"—Twice with the strong word (*agapao*) once with the weak word (*phileo*) which Peter always answered with the latter; the wounded character of Peter's third reply, for the repetition of such a question would naturally cut him to the heart; his curiosity concerning John's destiny and the rebuke which it called forth, are incidents of a kind which preclude the smallest legendary influence.

¹ That is, to members of the Apostolic band as such.

THE APPEARANCE TO AN UNBELIEVING RELATIVE

The witness of St. James is very important;¹ for "he was the natural representative of the family of Jesus, and it may have been in this capacity that he received a separate revelation of the risen Lord."² An unbelieving relative is the hardest person imaginable to convince. No mere reasoning will convince him; but, if his sympathy and respect are aroused by suffering nobly borne, there may be such a change of heart as to make conviction possible. The appearance of the Lord to St. James was almost the only kind of evidence which could convince him; and history tells us how the erstwhile unbelieving relative presided at the great apostolic council in Jerusalem and wrote the earliest of the New Testament Scriptures.

THE FAREWELL APPEARANCE: THE ASCENSION

The disciples then went back to Jerusalem, where the Lord met them and finally destroyed their material conception of the Messianic kingdom.³ Then He led them out towards Bethany; and while in the act of blessing them He was taken up into Heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight—for His earthly ministry was ended, and He must sit down upon the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 7.

² Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

³ Acts i. 1—12; Lu. xxiv. 50—53.

throne of His glory, from thenceforth expecting until His enemies be made His footstool.

THE WITNESS OF ST. PAUL

Saul of Tarsus, a young and patriotic Jew of the Dispersion, whose mind was filled with the noblest ideals and devoted to the God-given religion of Israel, came to Jerusalem a few months before the death of the Lord Jesus, or, perhaps, immediately after that event.¹ He was of sufficiently high position and ability to be admitted to the councils of the High Priest; and, though no Sadducee, he abhorred the new religion which had sprung from the empty grave of the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw in the cross of Christ a travesty of the faith and hopes of the nation, and a degradation of its most cherished ideals—for the conception of the Coming Prince was the most cherished hope of Israel. He, therefore, inspired by patriotism and religious fervour, strove to destroy the faith of the Gospel. He was present as the official witness at the trial and death of Stephen. He, breathing out threatenings against the saints, obtained letters from the High Priest to the Jewish authorities at Damascus empowering him to search out and apprehend the followers of the Lord. On the way a great light suddenly shone around him, and he was struck to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

¹ Acts ix. 26; Gal. i; Cor. xv. 8—11.

Those who were with him saw the light, and heard the sound of the voice, but not the words. He then went on to Damascus, after he had seen and spoken with the Lord Jesus. A disciple was sent to him in three days' time to restore his sight. He was baptised, and was henceforth the most significant figure in the Christian annals. The only way to account for his conversion, without allowing the objectivity of his experience, is by hallucination—possibly of epileptic origin. But in view of the fact that history knows no epileptic of abiding influence, that epileptics are, as a rule, weak-minded, whereas St. Paul was a statesman of the first order, the philosopher who made the first advance, since Aristotle, in Greek philosophy, and the greatest theologian whom the world has ever seen—it seems unreasonable to deny him the capacity of judging what he saw, and to ascribe his conversion to dementia.¹ Moreover, if any trust can be placed in the accounts which relate that those who were with him saw a great light and heard the sound of the voice, there were certainly some objective phenomena. After all, St. Paul is the best authority upon his own sensations, and, however we may explain it, he undoubtedly did believe that he saw and heard the Lord Jesus while on his way to Damascus. He must have convinced the other Apostles of the reality of his experience, or else he could not have obtained admission to the Apostolic band.

There can be no doubt that St. Paul was convinced

¹ Note B.

of the objectivity of his experience. The farrago of nonsense about a spiritual resurrection, which has been inflicted on the world in recent years, finds no support in his robust and virile thought. The *locus classicus* of this controversy¹ makes that finally clear. He thus sums up his gospel to the Corinthian Church: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until this present, but some are fallen asleep; then He appeared to James; then to all the Apostles; and, last of all, He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time."

Thus, when the Apostle wrote, the Resurrection was already a fact of history—not of present experience. The appearances lay in the past, and there is no indication that the Apostle thought another manifestation at all probable. His appeal is to historical evidence.

The Apostle's use of the physical resurrection of the Saviour for the purpose of establishing the resurrection of the dead in Christ is very important. Some of the Corinthians said that the dead did not rise. Then, said St. Paul, our preaching is vain, for Christ is not risen; but the fact of His resurrection is certain—it is based upon indubitable historical evidence—and

¹ 1 Cor. xv.

therefore the dead do rise. More than this, he discussed the objections arising from the nature of the resurrection body which are often urged in the present day. Thus the fundamental fact on which his whole theory is builded up is the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the contention of Professors Gardner and Lake that the physical resurrection was merely incidental to his thought is simply a perversion of the plain facts of the case.

It may be well to remark that the physical resurrection is simply a question of fact. It is, therefore, analogous to those other questions of fact which are daily submitted to a jury: so that the evidence of any honest man whose sense-perceptions were normal is just as important as that of any rationalist.

II. THE RESURRECTION AND THE PERSON OF CHRIST

There is another fact to which the negative criticism of to-day, true to its principle of interpreting the highest by the lowest, has never given sufficient attention. When we are estimating the credibility of any unusual event, due reference should be made to the personality involved. Professors Percy Gardner and Schmiedel both recognise this principle and apply it within very narrow limits to the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ: but they totally ignore it in relation to the miracles of His Person—the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and Ascension

—though it is just in this connection that the full recognition of the imposing character of His Personality is most necessary.

In the first place, the Resurrection is implied by the ascertained fact of the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus. We have already seen that this involves a miracle from the physician's point of view, and, therefore, a supernatural physical organism. Is it conceivable that the God who had intervened in the normal course of events to provide a physical habitation for the sinless Personality would leave that organism to moulder away in the grave? Is it conceivable that the outward organism of the sinless Personality should be subject to the processes of corruption? The ascertained fact of the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus—since the affirmative answers to these questions presuppose a wastefulness of Divine power which is without analogy in nature or grace—strongly confirms the objective evidence for the Resurrection.

Secondly, the physical resurrection of the Saviour is a necessary concomitant of His Deity. If the Lord be God, it is natural—not contrary to nature—that His glory should have been manifested by His resurrection; and it would be absurd to describe Him as holding the keys of death and Hades, while His own physical organism was holden of death. We may say, without fear of exaggeration, that it is incredible that the body in which God deigned to dwell, the flesh wherewith He became incarnate, should be holden of death.

There is another consideration of great force which goes to support the evidence for a physical resurrection—its coherency with, and implication by, the general system of the earliest Christian teaching. He would be a bold man who, in view of the Master's claim to be the "Resurrection and the Life," would assert that it was alien from His teaching, or deny that it was bound up with, and involved by way of necessary consequence in, the truth of His doctrine. Nor does a consideration of the Apostolic and early Christian teaching give us a different result. From the days of St. Paul, the fact of human immortality has received its main confirmation from the physical resurrection. Justin Martyr urges that the resurrection of Christ gives assurance of our resurrection; and Athenagoras contends that the idea of judgment to come, a primary postulate of human nature, necessitates a physical resurrection of mankind. This thought is found throughout the Early Fathers; the physical resurrection of mankind (which is rendered a certainty by the resurrection of our Blessed Lord) is, in the last analysis, involved by human immortality and by the doctrine of judgment to come. A still more important testimony is to be found in the New Testament conception of the complementary character of the resurrection and death of the Redeemer. There is no doubt that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was a physical event; and the fact that the Resurrection was regarded as its complement shows that the first disciples were perfectly satisfied as to its vital character. Such

passages as 1 Cor. xv. prove beyond the possibility of doubt that the Christian doctrine of immortality is that of the immortality of perfect manhood, both body and soul, and finds its basis in the physical resurrection of our Blessed Lord; and therefore fluent rhetoric about the spiritual resurrection is really a confession that the world has been vainly deluded for the last nineteen centuries.

III. THE FACTS ESTABLISHED

Our next duty is to collect and weigh the facts which are established by the testimony. They are numerous and of the very gravest significance, so that it is of the utmost importance to estimate their significance with accuracy.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL FACTS

The first fact which emerges from our survey of the evidence is the total absence of sensational and theatrical elements from the records. There is no sign of that tendency to the multiplication of wonders which marks the early Christian legends. The story is told in the simple and straightforward way of the candid historian. The only miracles, apart from the Resurrection and Ascension, which they record are those of the earthquake and the miraculous draught of fishes. The appearances are few and well defined; and there is no tendency to multiply them. St. Matthew records

two, St. Luke, three, and St. John, four appearances of the Risen Lord. St. Mark's Gospel is mutilated and records none—unless we accept the last twelve verses, which would involve an unnecessary critical discussion. The entire absence of any attempt at elaboration of the Lord's teaching and works during the great forty days goes far to guarantee the absence of legendary elements; for it is inconceivable that any legend-maker would fail to embellish such a tempting subject.¹

The second fact which has emerged from our survey is the flight of the Roman Guard which had been stationed at the tomb to arrest the Risen Christ. Some event of a terrifying description must have happened in the neighbourhood of the tomb, or else a Roman Guard would not have deserted its post. The very malignity of the authorities has thus provided an unexceptionable witness to the truth of the physical resurrection.

The third fact is that of the empty grave. The Four Gospels all testify to it and to the terror and dismay of the disciples when they discovered the fact. Christianity was born on the Resurrection morning and would have died if only its Founder's Body had been produced. His enemies may be cited—since they did not produce It—as indirect witnesses to the truth of the Apostolic story. Why did not the Jews produce the Body? St. Matthew tells us how they accounted for the empty tomb. They gave large money to the soldiers who had

¹ Note C.

vainly guarded the tomb to say that the disciples had stolen the Body; and there can be no doubt that this story was widely current among the enemies of the Gospel in the early ages. But Paley's old argument that men will not invent a tale for the pleasure of dying for it and of giving up home and country and religion and everything that men hold dear has caused this slander to die a natural death. Thus, Gardner and Lake both admit the fact of the empty grave.

Professor Lake's theory, by which he endeavours to account for the fact of the empty grave, is so totally devoid of all historical sense that it would not have been worth while mentioning had it not been adopted by a far abler man. Dr. Warschauer, in his volume "Jesus: Seven Questions," has adopted the theory and given it the protection of his name. His statement is too long to be quoted in full, but the chief points of it are briefly as follows:—So far from Joseph of Arimathæa being a disciple of the Master's, he acted on behalf of the Sanhedrin! The women prepare spices after they have seen the burial, and on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, go down to the sepulchre.

"In the uncertain dawn they proceed to what they think is the exact spot, but, to their utter bewilderment and yet very naturally, they make a mistake and find themselves facing an open sepulchre instead of the closed one they are in search of, and in the entrance, or close beside it, stands a young man. Possibly he has seen these women before; anyhow, he guesses their

object, especially when he notices their obvious distress and helplessness. Perhaps one of them has involuntarily exclaimed, 'They have taken the Lord away!' 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified,' says the young man, desiring to help them. 'You have come to the wrong place; He is not here. Behold!' (with a gesture in the direction of the real tomb) 'there is the place where they laid Him!' What more natural than this? But what more natural also than that the women fled headlong, startled, feeling they had been detected after all, not knowing whether by a friend or an enemy, and with a very confused impression of what the young man did say? . . . So much appears certain, that the story of the tomb being found empty by the women, however much elaborated by later tradition, is not a mere invention but rests upon a foundation of fact, and in the long run it seems that we are shut up to the choice between the real resurrection of the very body of Jesus and some such explanation as this. . . . We hold that where a natural explanation is available no supernatural one need be sought or appealed to."¹

It is hard to discuss such an explanation of the fact, which, after all, was a fundamental and primary fact in the Jerusalem witness, without seeming to disregard the high authority which rightly attaches to Dr. Warschauer's name. In the first place, there is not a shred of evidence in favour of this hypothesis, which

¹ pp. 257—258.

Dr. Warschauer truly describes as a mere theory. In the second place, we naturally want to know something more about this mysterious young man. We can understand a Divine messenger being at the tomb and the women being frightened by him, but why they should be scared out of their wits by a young man who was actually doing them a kindness passes our comprehension. How does this aforesaid young man know which is the Lord's tomb? Why is he there at that early hour? Harvey seems to have sat among the tombs for the purpose of producing his famous "Meditations," but no intelligible reason is assignable for this young man being his antitype. Is it conceivable that the Jews—and this is the supreme objection to this and any other theory which has yet been promulgated for the purpose of accounting for the empty tomb—would not have produced the Body if it had been available? The public propaganda of the Apostles began within a few hundred yards only a few weeks later, and even allowing for the incapacity of the women to remember where the Master was laid, are we also to assume that the Sanhedrin, which had buried the Criminal instead of leaving His burial, as was the custom, to anybody who cared to undertake it, was so sympathetic that its weeping emissaries entirely forgot where they had laid the body of the pretended Messiah? The tomb was empty. We can only account for the fact either by this theory or by the fact of the resurrection. We are driven to the conclusion that the error which admittedly lay at the basis of

Christian belief was either due to the Master using the blunder of the women for His own purposes, or else that the whole thing is due to the disordered minds of the great numbers who saw the Risen Lord. If the theory had not been accepted by Dr. Warschauer—whose acceptance of the immeasurable miracle of the Sinless Personality in which the Divine was incarnate, renders his objection to the physical resurrection a straining out the gnat with the finest of hair sieves after swallowing the camel without apparent difficulty—we would have been inclined to characterise Mr. Lake's theory as the latest absurdity of unbelief.

Our fourth fact is that of the grave-clothes. This is recorded by St. Luke and St. John. It is also implied by St. Mark's mention of the women entering into the tomb, or else the angel's invitation to behold the place where the Lord lay was unmeaning. The language used in describing the state of the grave-clothes is very important. The linen clothes were found "by themselves," according to St. Luke, and St. John records how that he and St. Peter saw "the linen clothes lying, and the napkin which was upon his head not lying with the linen clothes but rolled up (*entetuligmenon*) in a place by itself." Would it have been possible, if the body had been removed by human hands, for the clothes which wrapped the body to have remained where it had lain, and for the napkin which did not belong to them to have retained its "twirled" form as a turban and remained on the ledge which formed the pillow for the head of

the corpse? This fact reveals the method of the Resurrection.¹ The Lord's Body was sown, like any other human body, a natural Body; it was raised, as ours will be, a spiritual Body. It would, therefore, simply pass through the clothes. When we know that paraffin oil will pass through a brass lamp and that light will pass through solid flesh and bone, we cannot say that the spiritual body of the Lord could not be so responsive to His will as to transcend the limitations of space and time. Indeed, if it did not, the whole reality of the Resurrection Body must be put aside and resurrection become a mere empty word.

2. THE NOTES OF TIME

The fifth fact—a very important fact indeed—is the precision of the time which is assigned to the Resurrection. “On the third day He arose again from the dead.” The tomb was found empty on the first day of the week. This assigns a date to the Resurrection which is inconsistent with any other hypothesis for the disposal of the Body than resurrection; and provides us with a present-day witness to the Resurrection. The Christian Sabbath is the first day of the week, not the seventh; and history shows that it was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first by men trained in the strictest school of Palestinian Judaism.² Only

¹ See Latham, “The Risen Master.”

² It is sometimes asserted that the observance of the Sabbath was not transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week

the Resurrection can account for this change; and the fact that we keep holy the first day of the week—not the seventh—fixes it as the birthday of the Resurrection belief.

Our sixth fact is of the same kind, and scarcely less important; for it destroys the possibility of the visionary hypothesis. It is the restriction of the appearances of the Risen Lord (if we except that to St. Paul) to the period of forty days. This is utterly incompatible with the visionary hypothesis; for psychology shows that, in the case of visionaries, the visions increase for a considerable time, and then gradually die away.

3. THE CHARACTER OF THE RESURRECTION BODY

The seventh fact is the physical and objective character of the Lord's body. It could be, and often in consequence of the Resurrection. We know, however, that (1) the First Day of the week was observed as the Special Day of Christian Worship in the days of St. Paul; (2) this change had his definite sanction; (3) without an effort and without a word of controversy the Seventh Day ceased to be observed by the Christian Churches; (4) once the Jews had finally taken a hostile stand against the Faith, and the breach with the Synagogue had become an accomplished fact, even the Jewish Christians never observed the Jewish Sabbath; (5) the Apostles and Elders at the Council of Jerusalem refused to regard the Mosaic observances as binding on the Gentile Christians. Is it conceivable in view of these facts that the Jewish Sabbath was not superseded, with Apostolic approbation, by the Christian Lord's Day? Is it conceivable that, if there had been the slightest Apostolic authority for the observance of the Seventh Day of the week by Christians *as such*, the First Day would have superseded it without a word of protest?

was, handled. Mary Magdalene touched it ; the women held Him by the feet ; the eleven handled Him on the night of the Resurrection ; and Thomas handled Him a week later. Those who saw Him, heard Him speak. Cleopas and his companion saw Him break bread ; the same evening the twelve saw Him eat ; and, later on, the seven partook of the meal which He had prepared for them. Hence, the Lord's Body is shown by every possible test to have been of an objective character. This precludes the possibility of the hallucination theories, or else demonstrates the absolute untrustworthiness of sensation as a source of exact knowledge.

The eighth and counterbalancing fact, which is established by the record, is the supernatural character of the Lord's Resurrection Body. It is a physical and objective Body, but it is no longer, as in the days of His humiliation, a natural Body. The Corruptible hath put on incorruption. The Mortal hath put on immortality. It is no longer bound by the limitations of earthly existence. It is visible and invisible at will. The Saviour could confirm the faith of Cleopas and his companion by disappearing from their sight after their eyes were opened ; He appeared twice in the midst of the disciples when they were assembled, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, in such a manner as to make them think—on the first occasion—that He was a Spirit. Hence, there is no parallel between the Resurrection of the Lord and the other resurrections of Holy Scripture. They were restored to natural, normal,

human life; He triumphed over death and hell. They were released from the bonds of death for a while; He ascended up on high and led captivity captive. No sound historical criticism, therefore, will attempt to classify the Easter Resurrection with those of the Old Testament, or those of Jairus' daughter and Lazarus of Bethany.

There is no need for us to dilate upon the ninth fact; for we have already sufficiently discussed the consonance of the Resurrection with the Sinless Personality of the Redeemer.

4. THE CHARACTER OF THE WITNESS

The tenth fact, that the testimonies can be formed into a coherent history without the aid of aught else than scissors and paste, is highly significant. We have records containing the testimony of eight or more independent witnesses by at least five independent writers. There are four accounts of the experiences of the women, and four women are mentioned by name as having been present. These accounts are consistent, but wholly independent. Thus, St. Mark's fragment tells us how the women left the tomb in fear, and said nothing to anybody; St. John only tells us of the appearance to Mary Magdalene; St. Matthew omits that, but tells us of the appearance to the women as they were going to tell the disciples; while St. Luke merely tells us that the women told the disciples of the vision of angels. These discrepancies—insignificant in any case—wholly disappear if we accept the hypothesis

that the accounts are those of the different women who were the actors in the scene. Indeed, it is difficult to escape from this conclusion, for the action of different editors would have resulted in much more serious discrepancies. This hypothesis surely does not strain the facts, and gives us at least twelve independent accounts, all of which are consistent with one another. This constitutes the very highest evidence of the truthfulness and capacity of the witnesses; for, given the action of either fraud or defective memory, such consistency and coherency would be impossible.

The eleventh fact, that the Lord was, as a general rule, seen by more than one person at a time, is worthy of attention. Visions are usually seen by one person alone; but the Risen Lord was seen—first by one person, then by four, then by one again, then by two, and then by at least twelve, on the day of His resurrection. A week later He was seen by at least eleven. The Galilean manifestations were seen respectively by about five hundred, and seven, persons. Then He was seen by the disciples at Jerusalem—by a hundred and twenty souls—for it is inconceivable that the return to Jerusalem was purposeless. The variety of the witnesses also is worth noticing; for it included a tax-gatherer, some Jews of the wealthier classes, at least two thinkers of the very first order, and some who were hostile to His claims until they were convinced by the vision of the Risen Lord.

The twelfth fact is perhaps the most important fact

of all. The despairing unbelief of the disciples did not expect the Resurrection, and was only overcome by repeated experiences. Mary Magdalene thought that the Risen Lord was the gardener, when she first saw Him; while the women had simply disbelieved the angel and not troubled to give His message to the Apostles; the two—and the rest for that matter—were only perplexed by the story of the women whose “words seemed to them as idle tales.” When the Lord appeared in the room, the disciples were terrified and were only slowly reassured: and finally, even at the great official manifestation in Galilee, some doubted for a time.

Our thirteenth, and last fact—the changed character of the disciples—disputes with the twelfth fact the place of primary importance: What changed the cowards of Gethsemane into the heroes of Pentecost? How was it that they who had not even the courage to testify at the judgment seat on His behalf, builded up the mighty structure of Christian faith and hope after the crucifixion?¹ “The unexpectedness of the resurrection proves that some actual experiences of fact must have taken place before the incredulous despair of the Apostles could be changed to confident belief.”² Thus, even so decidedly negative a critic as Dr. Gardner admits the fact of the objective experiences of the disciples and the empty grave. This gives us the old

¹ Note D.

² Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

familiar argument in all its force—either the Resurrection is an historical fact, or else the genesis of Christianity is unintelligible. It is obvious that the physical Resurrection is an adequate cause for such effect; and it is by no means insignificant that the sceptical theorists have proved so helpless in face of the facts.

IV. THE NEGATIVE EXPLANATIONS PSYCHOLOGICALLY AND HISTORICALLY IMPOSSIBLE

Even if we waived the competency of the witnesses, the theories which the negative critics put forward to account for the undoubted facts are so contradictory to the facts of human nature and history alike as to establish a resurrection hypothesis by default. A brief examination of the two theories which are most popular to-day will suffice to establish this. Let us take the "Swoon" theory first, which (according to Professor Gardner) is still advocated by some able critics. It was possible for a man, if he was soon taken down from the cross, to outlive the sufferings of crucifixion, and it is certain that the Lord was taken down from the cross within a few hours of crucifixion, and also that He might reasonably have been expected, apart from His previous sufferings and mental anguish (not to speak of the spear-thrust whereby the Roman soldier doubly assured His death), to have lived for two or even three days. But the theory raises the following questions, to which no plausible answer has ever been made: How was the stone removed by a crippled and tortured Man

who had just recovered from the death-like swoon? How did He give that impression of triumph over death and Hell which He undoubtedly did impart? How did the stories arise without shameful and inconceivable fraud, when the disciples knew that He had not died at all? What is the source of the doctrine of the Supernatural Body which these stories contain? So insuperable have these difficulties proved themselves to be that some of the severest criticisms on the theory have emanated from the negative camp.¹

The Vision theory is much more widely held than the Swoon theory; yet no hypothesis ever lacked objective evidence and internal credibility more than the theory to which Professor Schmiedel and his friends have pinned their faith. The principal conditions of vision-seeing are time for the visions to arise, and a state of mind, ecstatic and unbalanced, which is favourable to the adoption of convictions without critical examination. Neither of these conditions existed in the case of the disciples. The Resurrection took place on the third day after the crucifixion, and all the appearances, with one exception, were completed within forty days. The disciples were depressed and despairing, never dreaming that they would again see those sacred features or hear those well-beloved tones on this side of the grave; and, finally, when a great number of them were gathered together, they saw the Lord. Nothing is more remarkable in the whole history of Christianity than the dull

¹ Note E.

perceptions of the disciples; they persisted in their unspiritual and material conceptions of the Kingdom of God even after the Resurrection was an accomplished fact; and they were sufficiently unexpectant, after they had heard of four distinct appearances of the risen Lord, to be terrified when He appeared to them on that first Easter evening, and attempted at first to account for the phenomena by this very theory of visions, or hallucination, for "they cried out, thinking that He was a spirit." This fact, that the Ghost theory occurred to them and that they tried to explain some of their earlier experiences by it, is a valuable testimony to the normal state of their minds when they saw the Lord, and ought to commend their witness to those who are still attempting to account for the appearances by this theory. These facts demand serious explanation, not mere verbal trifling. It is also interesting to observe the identity of unbelieving reasoning in all ages, but the logic of facts was too much for the disciples. The idea of visions filled their hearts with terror; the physical resurrection turned their sorrow into joy. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE. THE RESURRECTION;
THE DIVINE SEAL ON THE PERSON, AND WORK,
OF CHRIST

The result of our examination of the evidence is that the records, while apparently discordant, are really in

the deepest accord; that the accounts of the five writers dovetail into one another, and form a coherent history of the events of the great forty days; and that the accounts are characterised by a reserve and simplicity which preclude legendary accretion. The accounts show that the disciples were by no means deficient in common sense, and that they were a very matter-of-fact body of men. They were hopeless and never thought of the possibility of the Resurrection; they were unprepared to hear evidence on the matter; and they could, therefore, only have been convinced through their senses. The appearances were visible to large bodies of men, to an unbelieving relative and to the very ablest of the enemies of the cross. The Lord's Body was tangible, visible, and His voice audible. He ate in the presence of witnesses. His Body was Supernatural and not limited by the conditions of earthly existence. The utter failure of the sceptical theorists to account for the facts is also established. These facts are sufficient, if any trust can be placed in historical science or human reason, to compel us to accept the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as a finally established historical fact—even without reference to the character of His Person, which, as we have seen, forms an additional guarantee of the well-founded character of the faith.

The physical resurrection is of very great importance in relation to the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is the Divine seal of approval on

His claims and character. The Divine Personality thereby received the Divine counter-signature in the realm of human experience. Christ's Body, mouldered in Palestine, would form a strong presumption that He was like other men and that the intellectual and spiritual genius of nineteen centuries has believed in vain.

The sinless life and character, the Divine Personality of the Redeemer, and the efficacy of His atoning work, have received their final demonstration by the physical resurrection: for the mind of man cannot conceive God the Father raising a deluded fanatic, or worse, from the dead; but if God hath manifested Himself in Christ Jesus, if the Latter is the Brightness of the Father's glory and the express Image of His Person, it is only reasonable to think that the Father should accredit His well-beloved Son's claims and mission for all time by clothing His Mortality with immortality; and that He, though His heel has been bruised in the conflict, should bruise the serpent's head.

HE HATH ASCENDED UP
ON HIGH

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CHAPTER VI

HE HATH ASCENDED UP ON HIGH

It is scarcely too much to say that the prime motive of the assault upon the historical character of the narratives which record the third and last of the personal miracles is that its success would seriously involve the credibility of the Resurrection narratives. 'It is therefore advisable to give a brief summary of the evidence for the Ascension, and to estimate the value of the principal objections which are alleged against it.

I. THE OBJECTIONS TO THE ASCENSION

The objection which arises from the miraculous character of the event scarcely deserves discussion, for it is absurd to say that God cannot, if He will, cause His Only-begotten Son to ascend visibly into the heavens. The other objection is more serious, and has been stated forcibly by Professor Gardner.

“At a time when heaven was popularly supposed to be an arch vaulted above our heads, where was the abode of God and the angels, such stories as these might well seem credible. But to us who know more

accurately the distinction between body and spirit, and who have penetrated the secrets of space more completely, they cannot but seem materialistic.”¹

This objection is based upon two untenable assumptions:—that the Biblical writers conceived of God as dwelling in a specific space, and that they conceived of heaven as a locality. No doubt, they used the language of space; but the merest glance at the New Testament phraseology shows that such language is consciously figurative. Knowledge can only be imparted in terms of the recipient’s experience; and therefore the use of such phraseology and actions—for the Incarnation is the revelation of God in the material world—is to be expected. The objection only reveals a painful lack of historical imagination on the part of the objector, and deserves no further consideration, until we are told in what way, other than in terms of human experience, the Creator could reveal Himself to man.

II. THE HISTORICAL TESTIMONY TO THE ASCENSION

We can now proceed to the statement of the principal line of argument for the Ascension fact. Although St. Luke alone gives a detailed account, almost every writer in the New Testament refers to it. Two examples of the place which it holds in St. Paul’s Epistles may be given. “Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 256—7.

above all heavens, that He might fill all things.”¹ These words, if they stood alone, would amply establish the fact of St. Paul’s belief in the physical Ascension; but they are supported by many other passages, such as his summary of the six points of the mystery of godliness, which ends with the words, “received up into glory.”² It is hard to see the reference of these words, if they do not refer to the physical Ascension. Nor are there fewer allusions to the fact in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which everywhere presupposes an ascended Lord. The entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies once a year is mentioned as a type of the entrance of Christ into heaven after the completion of His sacrificial work: “Having then a great High Priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”³ If the Ascension was not a fact, Christ had not passed through the heavens, and the writer used meaningless words; but to him, and that is our present concern, it was a fact. Nor is the testimony of St. Peter discordant; for he states, just as explicitly as either of the previous writers, his faith in the ascended Lord, and draws a parallel between the Ascension and the Resurrection. He refers to “the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven.”⁴ These and many

¹ Eph. iv. 9—10.

² 1 Ti. iii. 16.

³ Hebr. iv. 14.

⁴ 1 Pet. iii. 21—22.

other kindred passages show that the physical Ascension obtained universal credence in Apostolic circles.¹

When we return to the Gospels, we find that the first, second, and fourth Gospels, all of which either explicitly state or imply the Ascension, make no mention of the circumstances. This gives an appearance of wild and reckless disregard of facts to such statements as "Paul, as we have seen, does not mention a physical Ascension, nor does Matthew."² St. Matthew records our Lord's words to the High Priest:—"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven"³—and his doctrine of the future judgment implies a physical return of Christ from Heaven, and involves, of necessity, His Ascension thereto. The conclusion of St. Mark's Gospel, whatever its value may be, tells us that "the Lord Jesus after that He had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God,"⁴ and St. John's Gospel gives us the Lord's words to Mary Magdalene:—"Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto my Father and your Father and unto my God and your God."⁵

These passages establish beyond the possibility of a

¹ Note A.

² Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

³ xxvi. 64.

⁴ xvi. 19.

⁵ xx. 17.

doubt that the Gospels, one and all, never contemplate any other ending to the earthly activities of the Lord than His physical Ascension into the heavens.

In St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles we have the only detailed accounts of the Ascension. There is no real discrepancy between them. If there had been, St. Luke was quite as capable of perceiving it as are any of his critics. The fact that St. Luke's Gospel does not mention the date of the Ascension is utterly unimportant: for it is obvious that the event really belongs to the Apostolic history rather than to the life and work of the Lord Jesus; so that a writer who purposed to write an historical sequel to the biography would merely incidentally mention a fact which would serve as the connecting link between the different parts of his work. As his account is circumstantial, moderate, and free from marvels, it affords every internal proof of historical credibility which can be desired. One event which he mentions could safely be inferred—if there were no record of it—from the general course of events. This is the conversation in which the disciples asked the Lord—"Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"¹—for nothing less than the authoritative, post-resurrection teaching of the Saviour could account for the triumph of that universalistic conception of the Messianic doctrine which had not been apprehended in the days of His flesh.

III. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS IMPLYING THE
ASCENSION

The second line of proof which we must now adduce is derived from the unique character of the Ascension as recorded by St. Luke. The details of the Ascension—the taking of the disciples out of the city towards Bethany on the Mount of Olives, the blessing of the disciples, the levitation which began during the act of blessing, the extremely definite time assigned to the Ascension (the fortieth day after the Resurrection), the amazement of the disciples and the explanation of the young men—are all worthy of the event, and are restrained and moderate in character. It is well worthy of notice that the Ascension narratives never conceive of heaven as a distant locality. The conception implied in the words—“a cloud received Him out of their sight”¹ is that the spiritual world lies behind the physical world, and is only separated from it by the thin veil of matter. Thus, the ascended Lord, though He has passed beyond our ken, is always with us. He is unseen, yet ever near. We may justly ask—on the assumption that the narrative is an outcome of the legend-making spirit (of which all undisputed examples are grossly materialistic and unspiritual)—How are we to account for this exaltedly spiritual conception of heaven? Whence did it arise?

The third line of proof is based upon the fact that

¹ Acts i. 9.

the physical Ascension is involved in the physical Resurrection. The bare fact of the Ascension is consequently attested by the whole weight of the historical and other evidence for the latter belief.¹ If the Lord had risen and not ascended, He could only have escaped His enemies in one of two ways. He might have evaded them by guile, in which case His followers must have borne the brunt of the attack. Thus the greatest ignominy of history—the cowardice which stains the reputation of leaders who desert their followers in the hour of their need—would have stained the Master's reputation. Could we regard such a One as the Ideal of humanity? If, on the other hand, He had met force with force, Christianity must have become a religion of the sword, and the primary purpose of the Advent must have been frustrated.

Further than this, the Ascension is involved in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have already seen that the flesh wherewith the Deity deigned to become incarnate could not be given over to corruption, and it is equally impossible to believe that the risen Son of God should not be glorified. If He were the First and the Last, if the work for which He became incarnate was accomplished, if He had proved Himself acceptable in God's sight, it is hard to see how the reward of His works could be withheld from Him, or, why He, having

¹ "The fact is that some account of an ascension became a necessity as soon as the corporeal resurrection from the dead was accepted." Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

by Himself purged our sins, should not sit down on the right hand of God. Another consideration may be permitted. Could we have worshipped a Being who resided at Jerusalem or London? The thought is impossible. Thus, the conception of the Lord Jesus as the Hearer and Answerer of Prayer, as the Sovereign of the Universe, and as very God of very God imperatively demands the Ascension.

The Ascension, therefore, is attested by as much historical evidence as can reasonably be demanded for any event; that is, by very much more than would be accepted as amply sufficient if the event were not miraculous. It is involved in the physical Resurrection, as well as in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its unique character and its deeply spiritual conception of the hereafter preclude the possibility of a legendary origin.

It only remains for us to point out the significance of the Ascension in relation to the Deity of the Saviour. It forms the final physical sign, the last outward manifestation of Divine approval of the works and claims of the Carpenter of Nazareth; for it is impossible to conceive of the Creator permitting the Ascension, far above all heavens, of a self-deluded, or deceitful, fanatic.

WHEREOF WE ARE WITNESSES

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CHAPTER VII

WHEREOF WE ARE WITNESSES

THE CHARACTER OF THE APOSTOLIC WITNESS

THE competence of the Apostolic witnesses is often depreciated on the grounds that they were born in a country and lived in times permeated through and through with a blind credulity in things supernatural. No objection could be more unfair; for, apart from the historical argument which disproves the fact, the Apostles have proved their excellence as witnesses by the faithful transmission of the profoundly original and morally miraculous teaching of the Master. The fact that they have proved themselves capable and faithful witnesses to the unusual in one sphere makes it unreasonable in the highest degree to discredit their testimony to other phenomena which are most intimately connected with the miracle of the teaching.

The representative character of the Lord's chosen band of disciples is very interesting. It was originally composed almost entirely of Galileans of various types. Such a man as Matthew the publican, who was a member of the hated class of tax-gatherers, was not likely to be very susceptible to sentiment, or lightly to

accept the Lord's Person as that of the Messiah of Israel. Even at the very end of the Lord's ministry the Apostles were so dull of comprehension that they were incapable of realising who the Master really was. Thus Philip, never perceiving that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself"¹—the fact which was so soon to be the burden of the Apostolic preaching—could ask the Lord on the occasion of the profoundly spiritual teaching of the Passion week, "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us."² The disciples were materially minded enough to think, even after the Resurrection, that the immediate purpose of the Lord's coming was to "restore the kingdom unto Israel."³ The whole history of the Saviour's fellowship with those who understood Him best is a pitiable record of their constant misunderstanding and lack of perception. A more hopelessly unimaginative body of men, and a more unwilling to apprehend the unusual, has never existed.

The independent and occasional character of the Apostolic writings precludes the possibility of their composition for the purpose of establishing the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostolic conviction that Christ is God was intuitive rather than ratiocinative. Just as Sir Isaac Newton is said to have perceived the truth of the propositions of Euclid without reading the proofs, so the Apostles living in the

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

² Jno. xiv. 8.

³ Acts i. 6.

presence of their risen Lord saw, without passing through the different stages of reasoning which justify the belief, the infinite dignity of Him who was "pleased as Man with man to dwell."

No single apostolic argument which was meant to prove the Deity of the Lord has been preserved for us, but the facts are there in rich abundance. It is also worthy of notice that their testimony was given in the midst of persecution, and that it stood the test of suffering. Like a fire on which a few drops of water has been thrown, apostolic faith in the Lord only burned the more brightly for the persecutions and sufferings which it entailed. As national and individual suffering had driven the Old Testament saints back upon the unchangeable faithfulness of God for solace, the first Christians, amid persecutions, and sufferings, and incredible toils, found their solace and stay in the Man who is God incarnate. Where the ancient Israelite said, "Jehovah," the early Christian, rejoicing in his fellowship with the Lord, said, "Jehovah Christ."

Another, and perhaps more important, guarantee of the value of the Apostolic witness is to be found in the fact that the Apostles and other writers of the New Testament were strict Jews who had been trained in the strictest Monotheism to regard the gods of the heathen with abhorrence, and who continued to regard the heathen worship as the worship of demons. Hence there is not the slightest probability that the Apostles invented the doctrine of the Deity of the Lord Jesus

Christ as a theory to account for the facts. The whole course of Monotheistic history shows that the idea which is most abhorrent to Monotheistic prejudices is that of a plurality in the Godhead. How, then, did this idea arise among men who were born and trained in the most fiercely Monotheistic atmosphere known to history? It was as likely to arise among the Apostles as is that of the Deity of the Roman Pope among the Orangemen of the North of Ireland.

Hence the character of the Apostles and of the society in which they lived, their religious presuppositions and national prejudices, all render it extremely improbable that the doctrine of the Deity of Christ could have arisen from any other cause than its essential truth. As it is obviously impossible for us to review the testimony of all the writers—or, for that matter, all the evidence of any single writer—within the limits of a single chapter, we can only select the most typical writers and review their testimony. We will, therefore, begin by reviewing the testimony of St. James, the family witness; and then pass on to that of St. Peter, the principal official witness; then, to St. John, the most intimate witness; and conclude with that of St. Paul, whom we may fairly call, the hostile witness.

I. ST. JAMES: THE FAMILY WITNESS

We know that none of the Lord's brethren believed in Him during the days of His humiliation; that the

Lord manifested Himself to His brother James after His resurrection from the dead; and that at least two of our Lord's brethren were afterwards numbered among His followers. We also know that St. James was held in great estimation by the Christians of Jerusalem, over whose Church he was called to preside; that he presided at the great Council of Jerusalem—taking precedence of the Apostles on that occasion; and that he is the author of the earliest extant Christian document. Salmon, Ritsch, Weiss, Beyschlag, Mayor, Zahn and Stevens date the Epistle of St. James from 45—50 A.D. A brief examination of this document will show us what the Lord's erstwhile playmate, who lived with Him in all the appalling intimacy of artizan family life as it existed in the First Century, thought of Him.

He begins his epistle by identifying his relationship to his Brother with that which he bears to his Creator, and ascribes the covenant name (for Jehovah is always translated by *Kurios* in the Septuagint) to Him—"James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." ¹ The next direct reference to the Lord is contained in his reference to the doctrine of prayer. He emphasises the necessity of unwavering faith, without which a man shall "not receive anything of the Lord." ² Whichever way we prefer to interpret this—whether by ascribing the epithet "Lord" to the

¹ i.

² i. 7.

Saviour or to the Father—it is clear testimony to the Deity of the Former. If the Former is Lord, He is the Hearer and Answerer of Prayer ; if the Latter, the title is synonymous with God, and the term “our Lord Jesus Christ” is really a formal ascription of Deity. The Epistle contains two references to the Second Coming,¹ and ascribes the Divine office of Judge to the Saviour,² who is also to give the crown of life to those who love Him.³ The sick are to be anointed in the name of the Lord,⁴ which is the honourable name.”⁵

Besides this, the Jews of the Dispersion, to whom the Epistle is addressed, are exhorted to hold not “the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Glory with respect of persons.”⁶ The most natural way of interpreting this remarkable expression—“the Glory”—is by reference to the Old Testament usage of the term. The ancient seers applied it to Jehovah. “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her.”⁷ Hence the phrase means the essential personal glory of God. It is the personal presence of God which is to be the glory in the midst of Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus Christ was

¹ v. 7, 8.

² v. 9.

³ i. 12.

⁴ v. 14.

⁵ ii. 7.

⁶ ii. 1.

⁷ Zech. ii. 5.

to His own brother within fifteen years of His shameful death the fulfilment of this prophecy, the manifestation in Person of the glory of God as the *tes doxes* in apposition to His name shows. Even if we reject this interpretation, which has the very highest exegetical authority—of Bengel among the older exegetes, and of Mayor and Warfield, the ablest among modern expositors of the Epistle—the passage bears an irrefutable testimony to the Superhuman character of Christ's Personality as conceived by His blood-brother.

“Whether the defining *tes doxes* means that He personally shares the divine Glory, or is now exalted to a heavenly sphere, or will reappear in glory at His parousia, it certainly attributes to Jesus a superhuman character.”¹

Space will not permit us to dwell upon the most important kind of testimony which is contained in this Epistle—the indirect witness to the Master's Deity. Suffice it to say that the burden of the Epistle is directed against a low morality accompanying a profession of faith.² In other words, St. James is attacking antinomianism. Not that he allows any saving efficacy to work. On the contrary, he explicitly says that he who breaks the law in a single detail is guilty of breaking the whole law;³ but the faith that saves is the faith that brings forth fruit.

¹ Stevens, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

² ii.

ii. 10.

Thus, fruitbearing is the test of faith. Where it is, there is saving faith. Where it is not, saving faith finds no place. We are justified by faith alone, but not by the faith which is alone: for faith justifies, not because it is full of love but, because it is full of Christ. The implications of this doctrine of salvation are most significant. It is not too much to say that it involves the whole system of Christian faith; for the Epistle of St. James contains the Reformation faith in its essence.

We are surely justified, in view of his ascription of the Divine offices of Saviour and Judge to his Brother, in saying that he regarded Him (with Whom he had played in the happy days of childhood), as essentially God, and ascribed to Him the religious, ethical, and official value of God.

II. ST. PETER: THE PRINCIPAL OFFICIAL WITNESS

The history of the early Church shows that St. Peter was the leader of the Apostolic band in virtue of being the most clear-sighted and courageous thinker in it. The references to him in the Gospels reveal him as a man of an enquiring turn of mind and an impulsive character. The latter sometimes led him into error, but carried with it the capacity for action which enabled him to direct the fortunes of the Church during the stormy days of its early history. Such a character forms a guarantee of his testimony to the Master. It expresses itself hastily; but is quick to see when it is at

fault, and quick to correct its errors; it is too independent to be led by others to any serious extent; and, therefore, if it should have good opportunities of observation, likely to form a just and sound estimate of personality.

What then is the estimate which St. Peter had formed of his Master? What character do his writings ascribe to Him? He exhorts the Christians to "sanctify in their hearts Christ as Lord"¹; and tells them that the eternal glory of God is in Christ.² Christ is the Sin-bearer who has redeemed us by bearing the penalty of our sins:—"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you: who by Him do believe in God."³ Thus, St. Peter, who seems in this epistle to have the practical purpose of urging the necessity of a higher morality and of comforting the disciples under their afflictions, teaches us that Christ's sufferings were the means of salvation, and that we are not redeemed with corruptible things but with the precious blood of Christ. This denial of the corruptibility of the Christ-life is substantially a denial

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 14.

² 1 Pet. v. 10.

³ 1 Pet. i. 18—20.

(since the life of any created being is corruptible) that He was merely a created Being. This prepares the way for the statements that this Christ was fore-ordained before the beginning of the world, and that He was manifested to mortal eyes. Surely, it is a remarkable thing, on the naturalistic hypothesis, that pre-existence, incorruption, and the covenant name of the Deity should be ascribed—especially in the incidental way in which the Apostle refers to these great subjects—to Christ by one of those who knew Him most intimately during the days of His earthly pilgrimage. The fact that St. Peter had no apologetic or dogmatic purpose to serve by these statements shows that he lived in the thought of the ineffable dignity of his erstwhile Companion; and his references show how closely identified in the Apostolic mind were the supreme dignity of the Person of Christ—that is, His essential Deity—with Christian living.

III. ST. JOHN: THE INTIMATE WITNESS

One of the members of the Apostolic band was a young man who enjoyed such a peculiar intimacy with the Lord Jesus that he was known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He lay upon Jesus’ bosom at the Last Supper, and asked the Lord to name the betrayer. He was a man of some position, and apparently connected with the High Priest; for he had access to the palace at the time of the trial, and was permitted to

stand near the Cross, and to hear the last commands and words of the dying Lord. He was the first believer in the Resurrection, being convinced by the circumstantial evidence of the empty grave and the grave-clothes. When the Lord gave the toiling disciples the miraculous draught of fishes, he was the first to recognise the Donor: but the same incident revealed his balance and self-control; for his quick perception of the wondrous truth did not induce him, as it did St. Peter, to neglect his immediate duties. Thus he, of all the Apostles, most clearly resembled the Master in his quick spiritual perceptions. He was also a thinker of the very first order, for we see no reason to reject the traditional view of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the three Epistles.¹ His works are of the greatest philosophical importance, and mark the author as one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Christianity.²

Our primary concern (since the greater part of the Christology of the Gospel is that of the Master Himself) would be with the teaching of the Epistles, were it not for the Logos doctrine which forms the introduction to the Gospel. Not that it teaches us anything new, or adds to the Christology of the Synoptic Gospels. The

¹ See Appendix I. The work of such scholars as Salmon and Westcott has never been refuted, and the difficulties of the traditional view are as nothing compared with those which attach to the other views which have been advanced.

² "The writer of the Fourth Gospel was one of the greatest thinkers and theologians who ever lived." Gardner, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

Synoptic doctrine only finds its highest philosophical expression in these few opening verses of the Fourth Gospel. The most important verses are as follows:—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the Only-begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth."¹

Thus, St. John regarded his Lord as Divine in the very highest sense of the term. The Saviour existed, to His disciple's thought, before all time: for the phrase is so constructed as to exclude the idea of time. Not only was He in active personal communion with God from the beginning, but (as the imperfect tense, by which St. John denotes a continuous and completed state, shows) was essentially God. Not only does the Carpenter of Nazareth hold this eternal and unique relation to the Divine, but He is conceived as the sole and universal Agent by Whose activity every single thing which has ever existed has come into being. He is the Source of Life, and the life which is in Him is the light of men; but it shineth in the darkness, which does not, and cannot, assimilate it.

¹ Jno. i. 1—5, 14.

“ Thus, the prologue depicts Christ as Divine in relation to God, as Divine in relation to creation, and as Divine in relation to human life. In the writer’s mind He is Divine in every sphere of thought and activity, and he describes Him as such in the most comprehensive terms which his vocabulary supplies.”¹

We can only take two passages from the Epistles, though their treatment of our sacred subject well deserves fuller consideration. “ Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His Only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”² The Apostle regards the Saviour as the Only-begotten Son of God, for the universe knows no relationship to the Father which is comparable, either in degree or kind, with His. He is conceived as pre-existent, for He is manifested in the world—God having sent Him into the world that we might live through Him. He is the Source of Life, and—having come to mediate between the justly-offended Sovereign of the Universe and His rebellious subjects—He is the propitiation for our sins. Another passage may be taken :—“ And we know that the Son

¹ Bishop Westcott *in loc.* (New Edition). He says further : “ We are led to conceive that the Divine nature is essentially in the Son, and at the same time that the Son can be regarded according to that which is His peculiar characteristic in relation to God as God.”

² 1 Jno. iv. 9—10.

of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.”¹ The Saviour is the Son of God and so identified with Him that to be in Christ is to be in God. He reveals God, He is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in the Divine Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is surely significant that the most intimate friend of a Galilean peasant, a man somewhat above Him in social rank, and a philosopher of the first order, should conceive that Peasant to be eternally existent ; in equal communion with the Father ; as the sole Agent in creation ; as the Light of history which lighteth every man which cometh into the world ; as holding a relationship to God which is absolutely without a parallel ; as the Covering for the sins of men ; as the Truth ; and as the all-comprehending Personality, which includes all believing human personalities in its perfection ; as being, in a word, of Divine majesty.

IV. ST. PAUL: THE HOSTILE WITNESS

We have already made some reference to the character and ability of the Apostle of the Gentiles ; but the subject is so extremely important that it is advisable for us to give a little more attention to it before we attempt to estimate the testimony of his writings to the Deity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is universally agreed that the Apostle was one of those

¹ 1 Jno. v. 20.

great geniuses who, from time to time, appear in the course of human history and appreciably alter the whole course of future history. It is, therefore, most interesting to find that, by birth and education, the genius of those three great races which are severally most significant for law, culture and religion, was focussed in his person. He was by birth a Roman citizen. The grand ideal of the Roman Empire—the great illustration of the maxim that unity is strength—exerted an incalculable influence upon him. Such a man, if he dreamed of an ideal future, could not be merely provincial in his conceptions, nor leave the Empire out of account. He was also a citizen of Tarsus, and the influence of Greek thought and life marked every action of his life and every line he ever penned. But, above all, he was a Jew of the Jews, a patriot and a religious thinker of the first order. He saw that the Jews must either conquer the Empire or be conquered by it, and that there was no possibility of the Jews ever obtaining a political predominance. Judaism, therefore—if it was to live—must establish itself as the religion of the Empire. Either it must raise the moral and spiritual tone of that wonderful organisation, or it must sink to its level. No patriotic Jew could look unmoved on such a prospect as the latter; no Greek thinker—especially one who had drunk deep of the pure waters of Israel—could be satisfied with the existing morality; and no Roman citizen could be contented with the general decadence.

St. Paul perceived that the establishment of Judaism

as the religion of the Empire would renew the life of both Empire and faith; that it was a greater destiny for Jerusalem to be the religious metropolis of the world than the political; and he also saw that the fusing of Greek thought with that of Judaism would, as the history of the early Church and of the Jews of Alexandria has proved, reinvigorate both the moral and the intellectual life of Hellenism. Thus, he went to Jerusalem, obsessed with the greatest of all religious ideas—that of the unity of God—and inflamed with the desire of extending the knowledge of the true God among the philosophers of Hellas and the statesmen of Rome.

We have already seen how abhorrent the Cross of Calvary must have been to him. The crucified Lord was a travesty of his religious ideals, which was well calculated to bring the faith of his fathers into contempt with both Romans and Greeks, and to render impossible the fulfilment of those designs which alone could rejuvenate the decadent thought of Hellenism, purify the corruptions of ancient society, and save the political organism which had achieved so much success from the destruction which the vices of its members merited. The very nobility of his character and aims, therefore, inspired the more fiercely his opposition to the Cross of Christ and his persecution of the Saviour.

It is extremely important to observe the influence of his pre-Christian aspirations upon his life work. The readjustment of his ideals and thought after his con-

version took a considerable time, for we find no traces of the world view which afterwards dominated his work and decided the destinies of Europe and of the Faith, until after his first missionary journey. Thereafter, his movements are those of a great statesman and soldier, who is intent upon conquering hostile territory. He works along the main roads which lead to Rome, grasps the strategic points, and is not to be turned aside from his purpose for the sake of capturing other positions —no matter how easy of conquest. He thinks out his plan in terms of the provinces of the Empire; after occupying one province and planting the banner of the cross in its capital, he leaves the reduction of the surrounding country to his lieutenants and presses on to the occupation of the next province. He values Ephesus as the gate between Asia and Europe. He thence presses on to Philippi, the capital of Macedonia; thence to Athens, where his one great disaster befalls him; thence to Corinth, the capital and strategic point of the Morea; thence he looks to Rome, by way of Illyricum; and after visiting Rome (for he would not build upon another man's foundation), he purposes going into Spain, thus occupying the Empire from east to west. Tradition tells us that he also came to Britain, the northernmost boundary of the Empire; and this untrustworthy tradition shows us how the early churches, which unconsciously worked out his plans, preserved a faint conception of what they were.¹

¹ Note A.

It is clear then that the testimony of St. Paul to Christ is not that of a mere enthusiast, but that of one of the greatest statesmen whom the world has ever seen, whose opportunities of observation were ample, whose whole personal interests and national and religious prepossessions were opposed to the claims of the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world. We are, therefore, concerned with the words and thoughts of a fine statesman and scholar, who was well accustomed to weigh his words and not to make rash utterances. We can most conveniently accomplish our survey of his testimony by examining the witness of the four great groups into which his Epistles naturally fall.

The third group, written at Rome, is composed of the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. They agree in their portraiture of a Divine Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians again and again asserts His equality with the Father as the Giver of peace and grace;¹ and identifies His kingdom with that of the Father.² By the knowledge of His love, which passeth knowledge, we may be filled into all the fulness of God—that is, the fulness of God dwells in Him.³ In Him every spiritual blessing is to be found;⁴ in Him there is redemption through His blood;⁵ in Him we

¹ i. 12.

² v. 5.

³ i. 23; iii. 19.

⁴ i. 3.

⁵ i. 7.

were chosen before the foundation of the world;¹ and by His agency we are adopted as sons unto God;² God is His Father;³ He is the Son of God;⁴ the One Lord;⁵ that is Jehovah, the covenant name of God throughout the Old Testament Scriptures; and He is also the Beloved⁶—a term which implies not merely a unique relationship to the Father, but that of the Eternal object of His solicitude and love. Above all, He is the fulness of God, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.⁷

Such phraseology is blasphemous, unless the writer regarded its subject as very God of very God; so that it is not surprising that the attribute of pre-existence and co-equal glory with the Father are ascribed to Him in the Epistle to the Philippians, when the Apostle desires to impress upon his converts the necessity of being humble-minded. “Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross.

¹ i. 4.

² i. 5.

³ i. 3.

⁴ iv. 13.

⁵ iv. 5.

⁶ i. 6.

⁷ i. 23.

Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the Name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”¹ Those quarrels and misunderstandings which disgrace every age of the Christian churches were rife in Philippi; so the Apostle adduces the example of the Master. What could it matter about questions of precedence and other trifles when the Lord of Glory gave up his pre-existent state of glory which he had aforetime with the Father; and—in His yearning love for humanity, and devoted self-sacrifice—counted it not a prize to be snatched at and preserved, that He shared, as an Equal, the glory of the Eternal Father? Having the outward state of God, He cast it all aside and took the low estate of a creature, of a slave, and underwent all that it involved, even to the penalty of sin in its most painful and disgraceful form—death by crucifixion. For this reason—that He sought not His own glory—God hath given Him the highest exaltation which even He can give, and the Name which is above every name, in order that in His name, in Him, every knee should bow, and that “every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” What a place to be assigned to a crucified Jew by an educated man of His own

¹ Phil. ii. 5—11.

generation! He shared the Divine glory and exaltation before time was! He was on an equality with God in all things! He deigned to suffer, and now He is again highly exalted, and possesses the Name which is above every name! How intimately associated is the thought of Christ in His glory with that of Christian practice! No tentative or formal Christology is this; but the living faith by which the earliest Christians lived and died. It is no exaggerated statement which describes the Epistles of the Roman Captivity as those of the Risen and Ascended Lord. In them St. Paul revels in the thought of the Risen Lord restored to the glory which He had aforetime with the Father before the worlds were made. If he glories in a crucified Redeemer, that Redeemer is the eternal God.

Two brief quotations will be a sufficient summary of the Christology of the second and fourth groups of St. Paul's Epistles—that is, of the Epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, Timothy, and Titus. Not only is every attribute of Deity constantly ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ, but the name of God is categorically given to Him, for the Apostle speaks of Christ “Who is over all, God blessed for ever,”¹ and of “looking for that blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”² Dr. Drummond admits that the only legitimate grammatical rendering of the first passage is to ascribe the

¹ Ro. ix. 5.

² Tit. ii. 13.

term "God blessed for ever" to the Saviour;¹ so that it is mere prejudice which would deny its reference to the Redeemer. The use of such language by the Apostle places his ascription of essential Deity to the Lord Jesus Christ beyond a doubt; for the resources of human language can give us no stronger terms than "God over all, blessed for ever," and "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

When we turn to the first group of St. Paul's Epistles—the Epistles to the Thessalonians—we find that the same conception of the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ dominates their thought of Him. If there are fewer formal statements of His Deity, the Apostle is more punctilious in giving Him the title of "Lord" than he is in any of the other Epistles; that is, he constantly describes Him as Jehovah. Christ is represented as associated with the Father in the direction of human affairs; for prayer is addressed to "God and our Lord Jesus Christ" to direct the Apostle's way to Thessalonica once again.² The exquisite passage of comfort to the bereaved ascribes the name of God to the Lord Jesus Christ. "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto

¹ "Academy," 1895.

² 1 Thess. iii. 11.

you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in nowise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”¹ The dead are in Christ ; they sleep in Jesus ; and those that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him. Now Jehovah is solely a designation of Christ throughout these Epistles. God shall bring the dead with Him, and the God who will do it is Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus, the earliest and the latest of the Pauline Epistles alike ascribe essential Deity to Him who was probably known to the Apostle Paul as the Carpenter of Nazareth.²

Thus, the best summary of the Apostolic witness to Christ is contained in the words of the Nicene Creed :—“ God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, Being of one substance with the Father by Whom all things were made.” What are we to think of the life and character which could impress men so diverse in every way as the Tax-gatherer of Capernaum, and the cultured and scholarly St. John with the unalterable conviction of the essential Deity of

¹ 1 Thess., iv. 13—18.

² Note B.

the Person whose they were; and which forced the rude fisherman of Gennesaret and the mighty statesman of Tarsus alike to fall down in worship at the foot of the Cross? We can only say, if either delusion or fraud was the origin of such testimony and faith, that one or the other has won a higher guarantee of truthfulness than the very truth itself has ever been able to obtain.

THINE IS THE KINGDOM

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CHAPTER VIII

THINE IS THE KINGDOM

CHRISTENDOM IS NOT CHRIST

IT will be well for us to notice at the outset of this enquiry and to continuously keep in mind the fact that Christendom, or organised Christianity, is not Christ. We therefore hold no brief for its actions, save in so far as they can be shown to spring from the principles of the Gospel. Christianity is Christ, not Christendom ; and the rock on which the Christian stands is Christ, the Saviour of mankind. Thus, even if it could be conclusively proved that the influence of the Churches was positively evil, no objection would lie against our position—unless that evil influence could be shown to have its origin in rightly understood teachings of the Gospel. The terrible crimes of the Mediæval Church, the disgraceful records of eighteenth-century Church history, the many errors and lukewarmness of the Churches of our own times, are, therefore, absolutely irrelevant pleas against the truth of the Gospel.

Nowhere in the New Testament (which constantly refers to the Churches of Christ) is any earthly body of men described as “The Church of Christ.” The

Church of Christ in Holy Scripture is the assembly of the Saints, the body of Christ ; which is composed, not of all baptised members but of the saints of God, the blessed company of all faithful people, of those who are justified and sanctified (really as well as sacramentally) by the operation of God the Holy Ghost. But perfect sanctification takes time; the divine life which flows from the Head must work itself out in the members and expel all foreign elements, so that (even assuming the possibility of an earthly Church which is wholly composed of believers) all its actions would partake of the imperfections of its component parts. Thus, the earthly Churches are rather to be regarded as human societies formed under a special divine sanction than as a divine society. They are composed of members who profess to be striving for the attainment of a common end—if haply they may win Christ—and exist like all other human societies for purposes of mutual help and comfort. Their actions, in so far as they are in accordance with the teachings of Christ, afford a valuable witness to Him; but, unless they are in accord with His precepts, they can only be regarded as eminently sad examples of the depravity of human nature.

We have now to give a brief statement of the argument which is derived from the Master's influence upon succeeding ages; and we may start our enquiry from the indubitable fact of the central character of the Lord's place in history. He is the Central Figure of

human history, and its greatest moral Force whether for good or evil. For the progressive races of the world history comes up to, and falls away from, the Cradle of Bethlehem. All modern history, in the broad sense of the term, dates from the time when He took the power of Rome unto Himself.

Perhaps the best way for us to realise the influence of the Master, as revealed in the history of the last nineteen centuries, will be to examine the character and effects of His teaching upon the three great ethical relationships in which man stands—to his Creator, to his fellows, and to himself.

I. CHRIST HAS REVOLUTIONISED OUR CONCEPTION OF GOD ; OPTIMISM IS THE RESULT OF THIS TEACHING

Nobody will deny that the Lord Jesus Christ has revolutionised our conception of the Deity and of our relationship to Him.

Neither the Greek nor the Hebrew doctrines of God can ever expect to win acceptance again. Much less can those coarse paganisms which formed the popular religion of the ancient world.

There is as great a difference between the Greek philosophical conception of God which recognised His Unity and Personality and the modern conception of God, as there was between the former and the paganism whose innumerable deities resembled their worshippers in their lusts and crimes. The Greek thinker could not

conceive of worshipping God ; for worship is an unthinkable relationship with a God who will not reveal Himself.

The other and more important conception of the Deity, which that of our Lord superseded, was an immense advance upon the Greek conception. Israel regarded itself as the agent of the revelation of God until the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as the waters cover the seas ; so that the Jewish doctrine of God (if we may neglect the decadent ideas of rabbinical theology) regarded Him as Self-revealing to the world through the Chosen People. This grand universalism was never fully appreciated by the nation, nor even by the Lord's disciples before Pentecost. There was, therefore, an immense difference between the highest Judaism and the Master's teaching—a contrast best described in the words of a Jewish disciple : “ the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”¹ What is the conception of God which the Lord Jesus Christ has implanted in the hearts of men ? Never again will the Greek philosophical conception of God be possible to thinking men ; for, Christ having brought God nigh to men by bringing them near to Him, the God whose existence is to be conceivable by the modern mind must be actively personal and operative in His Universe. In the next place, the majesty and holiness of God has been revealed as never before. We cannot, if we would, ever again

¹ Jno. i. 17.

ignore the fact that God is a just and holy Being who will by no means clear the guilty; for "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh."¹ But the teaching of the Saviour did not stop here. It went beyond the noblest conception of Judaism, and rendered it as obsolete as the Greek conception; for the God of Judaism, though He was a Self-revealing God, a Covenant-keeping God, could not be His people's Companion and Friend. Now the Lord Jesus Christ revealed God, not merely as bridging over the gulf which separated Him from man, but as the loving Father to whom erring humanity with all its sins and sorrows could go in the certainty of finding pardon, and peace, and a loving welcome. Thus, the only conception of God possible to-day is that which the Lord Jesus Christ has impressed upon all Theistic thinkers. Even if we refuse to accept the historical and spiritual reasons which justify the belief, no other doctrine of God than that "God is love" is now thinkable.

CHRIST, THE SOURCE OF OPTIMISM

A practical result of this change in the conception of God ought to be mentioned. To the ancient world the golden age lay in the past, and man was steadily declining to the earth from whence he was taken. Hence optimism did not exist. A being who at the highest estimate was at hopeless war with his Maker, whose individual future was wrapped in gloom and

¹ Ro. viii. 3.

mystery, who was on the down grade intellectually, socially, and morally—a theory which accorded well with the facts of ancient life—could scarcely feel very hopeful. But the conviction that his Maker cared for him; that God would see that he (if only he used the means provided) developed unto perfection; that a Father's loving care was protecting him throughout this earthly pilgrimage; that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what good things God hath prepared for them that love Him,"¹ necessarily changed all this. To the man who believed this, the golden age no longer lay in the past, it was a bright certainty which the future held in store for him and all other believers. The age of innocence might lie in the past; the golden age of the coming perfect manhood lay in the future. Thus, he could no longer look upon the future with dismay, no matter what sorrows it might hold in store for him; even though daybreak might be far off, joy cometh in the morning. Is it not the special characteristic of the modern conception of life that it conceives of the golden age as a future event? Even those who bid us reject Christ and his conception of God comfort us with the assurance that, though man was a degraded creature in the past, he is steadily advancing and improving, and that nobody can say what good the future holds in store for him. Of course, there are warning voices which are raised in protest against this baseless optimism, pointing out that there is no justification for it whatsoever

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

and advocating a return to the dull and hopeless creed of pessimism. But the voices of Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and their followers, are drowned by the pæan of Christian confidence and hope. If ever the day comes, in which the teaching of the Redeemer is universally rejected, we may see a decay of optimism; but, till that day dawns, faith and unbelief alike sun themselves in the optimism of the Gospel.

II. CHRIST HAS REVOLUTIONISED OUR CONCEPTION OF INDIVIDUALITY

The Lord Jesus Christ has also revolutionised the conception of the individual and all his relationships. The individual, as such, had but few rights in the ancient world; his importance arose from his citizenship of some city or state, which happened to be sufficiently powerful to secure the recognition of his rights and privileges. He, therefore, respected himself in his capacity as a citizen, or as the friend of a citizen, rather than in his capacity as a man. Now the value of the individual soul is immensely enhanced by the thought that it is capable of fellowship with God, and still more by the realisation of the fact that God loves it. This is even more the case when the individual realises that he is no longer helpless and hopeless, but that the ideal of perfect manhood is attainable by him, and that his Creator has provided the means whereby he may come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The fact that he is no longer destitute of

moral strength and purpose, but the companion of God, necessarily raises man's self-respect. The man who realises his high destiny—and still more the moral grandeur of his present position—must strive to walk worthily of his high calling. Being the son not merely of a King but of the King of Kings, he instinctively revolts from unworthy actions whether of thought or deed; so that, no matter how he may fail in practice, no matter how often he may fall, the man who has ever so faintly apprehended the sanctity of individuality as conceived by the Lord Jesus Christ is a better man just because he has succeeded in doing so. This, again, is intensified in its potency to raise man's self-respect by the Incarnation of the Son of God; for none dare hold in light esteem a being whose form God has deigned to assume.

This increase of self-respect has been accompanied by a profoundly increased respect for the rights of others. If my neighbour, for aught I know, may be, and certainly can be, the King's son and the friend of the Almighty, he is invested with a sanctity and a dignity which preclude a low estimate of his worth; and, since his must be of at least equal worth, I can no longer consider merely my own interests and convenience. This estimate of the worth of individuality has led to a final change in the ethical ideal; for man, once he realises the infinite value of the human soul, cannot be content merely to achieve his own good. He must strive, even at the cost of his personal inclinations, to perfect individuality wheresoever he finds it. This

involves the great basal doctrine of our Lord's ethical system—the doctrine of self-sacrifice—that man's good consists in advancing the good of others, not in selfishly seeking out perfection for himself. Herein the Lord profoundly differs from the noblest and best of the ancient teachers. They never rose above the ideal of personal development to perfection, and proposed sadly inadequate means. To Buddha, as to the ancient Greek thinkers, the end and aim of man was to develop himself. They only differed in the methods whereby they proposed to attain this end. Here they differed greatly—some recognising, some not perceiving that perfect development depends upon the abnegation of self—but they all regarded self-development as the final end of human effort. Self-preservation, to the greatest of the non-Christian moralists, was the first law of nature : though self-preservation need not mean, as in practice it did and does mean, physical self-preservation. The ancient world approved this teaching and grossly materialised it in practice, so that the establishment of the principle of self-sacrifice is one of the finest triumphs of Christianity. To us there can be no question that the good of others is ideally more important than the good of self, but this was not the case in the ancient world. The man, who lived in the atmosphere of Greece, or Rome, or Judæa, would have regarded the doctrine that love is the noblest thing in the universe as grotesque. To him the doctrine that the good of others was the thing that

really mattered, would have been very far from a manifest truth—indeed it would have been much nearer a manifest absurdity—so that the doctrine of self-sacrifice, our Lord's basal principle of ethics, was promulgated in a hostile ethical atmosphere, and had to win its way in a society which was opposed by tradition, education, and interest.

An example of the potency of the increased self-respect and respect for others, which has followed from the teaching of the Prophet of Galilee, is to be found in the changed conceptions of personal purity which now obtain. The ancient world did not possess this conception. Its noblest teachers permitted self-indulgence to any extent which did not interfere with personal development ; nor is Buddha any exception to the rule. His sole reason for inculcating the principle of ascetic chastity was that it promoted the attainment of Nirvana, a purely selfish end.¹ The fact that the misuse of the body was personally degrading, and that it was an outrage on the rights of others, never seems to have occurred to Plato, Aristotle, or Socrates.

III. CHRIST HAS REVOLUTIONISED OUR CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD

I. THE FAMILY

This brings us to the third ethical relationship in which man stands—his relationship to his fellows, or to

¹ Note A.

the world, for man is essentially a social animal, and can only realise his destiny in fellowship with his equals.

If the Master had done nothing more than emphasise the sacred character of personal purity, He would have been the greatest Benefactor of the family who has ever lived ; but He has given other and royal gifts to the family and to every member of it. He has denounced and condemned the practice of easy divorce—so universal in His day—and the consequent disregard of the rights and sanctity of womanhood. He secured, by the promulgation of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, the recognition of the essential equality of the sexes ; for beings, who may be alike children of God, who share the same burden of guilt, and for whom the same sacrifice has been offered, cannot regard their fellows as inferiors. Hence the New Testament doctrine that “in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female,”¹ is the charter of womanhood, and has emancipated woman from the debasing choice of ancient society between a degrading bondage and unholy license.

It will never again be possible for a father to sell his children or totally to disregard their rights: for Christ has compelled the recognition of the rights of individuality within the family circle. At the same time He established the sanctity of the family and of parental authority. Children are to “obey their parents in the Lord for that is right” ; wives are to obey their own husbands ;

¹ Gal. iii. 28.

parents are not to provoke their children to wrath ; husbands are to cherish their wives as their own bodies.¹ All this has been enforced by the example of the family at Nazareth. The Saviour Himself was subject to His mother and foster-father ; when Joseph died, His labour at the carpenter's bench maintained the family, until His brothers were of an age to take His place (in no other way can the late commencement of His ministry be explained) and amid His mortal agony on the Cross of Calvary He was so mindful of family ties as to make provision for His mother's future.

There is another family and social institution which owes an incalculable debt to the Lord Jesus Christ. Aristotle considered that a slave class was absolutely necessary, because some kinds of labour were too essentially degrading for free men ever to engage in them. Thus, labour was in itself so degrading that slavery was a necessary social institution. It is well worth while remarking the kinds of labour with which no noble man would deign to soil his hands. The artizan, mercantile, and practically all, save the leisured, classes were incapable in his opinion of perfect development—though, indeed, his perfect or noble man would be most severely handled at an English public school as a perfect prig. Labour is now, theoretically at all events, regarded as a noble thing ; for the Saviour has destroyed the idea that any form of labour is degrading in itself. The thing which now

¹ Eph. v. 22 ; vi. 4.

matters is not what a man does, but how he does it; and manual labour, since men who worship the Carpenter of Nazareth can scarcely afford to despise the artizan, has come into its own. Besides this, all labour, being one of the determining factors in the education of the human soul, has eternal significance, and is ennobled by the doctrine of its infinite value.

The Saviour has also made slavery impossible; for the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God implies the further doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man, and it is not a brotherly act to hold a man as your slave. The history of nineteen centuries justifies the assertion that freedom is a Christ-gift to the world. "In Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free."¹ The fact that owner and slave alike are of equal value in the sight of God has rendered it impossible for slavery to live in the light of the Gospel. Scarcely had the Gospel been preached, long before it had had time to establish itself, it began to shake the institution of slavery, and to ameliorate the lot of the slave. St. Paul urges his converts who are slaves to carry out their service as unto the Lord, and those who are slave owners to remember that they and their slaves alike belong to the same Owner, even to Christ.² Slavery becomes serfdom, and serfdom becomes freedom, under the solvent of the Gospel. Thus, the most unnatural forms of slavery—those of white man to white man—which had the approval and support of the noblest

¹ Gal. iii. 28.

² Eph. vi.

moralists of the ancient world, were destroyed by the influence of Christ. The idea of the slavery of Christians had become so utterly abhorrent that it was not revived even amid the horrors of the wars of religion, when every evil passion in the human breast was fostered under the cloak of religious zeal. Similarly, the scandal of the slave-trade was abolished by the efforts of Christian men; and the influence of the Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century led to the abolition of slavery within the British dominions at immense cost to the nation. The history of the United States of America is not dissimilar. The great abolition movement was fostered and led by Christian men. The illustrious leaders of the North—Presidents Lincoln, Grant and Garfield—were all eminent Christian men.

2. CHRIST AND THE STATE

The Lord Jesus Christ has also transformed the very character of the State—the second social institution of which we cannot choose but form a part. If the people are no longer regarded as existing for the State, but the State is conceived as existing for the people, a far higher standard of duty has been impressed upon political life; and true political freedom has been given by the Gospel to political life. The Gospel doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man has rendered it impossible for us to deny political rights to any man (save for his own good): for, while every man has a right to be well

governed, no man, unless he is competent for the task, has a right to share in the government. The creation of a despotism, after the limited freedom of the ancient world had been destroyed by its own corruption, preserved the Roman Empire for a few more centuries. In the wreck of the Roman Empire political freedom (though some of its privileges were saved for the people by the action of the Churches) was forgotten ; but the same principle which compelled the abolition of slavery has abolished tyranny. The being who is fit to be a citizen of heaven is certainly fit to share in the government of an earthly state. Hence political freedom has followed in the wake of the Gospel. England, which is pre-eminently the country of the Gospel, is the country which is most significant for political science : and a scrutiny of her history gives the not-surprising result that political freedom has followed in the wake of the great religious movements. The Lollards paved the way for the great mediæval movements for political freedom ; and the great movements which finally broke the power of the monarchy were all preceded by great religious movements, and led by men of profoundly spiritual character. The revolt of the Commons against the power of the Throne (which called forth from the great Queen who had ruled the nation with autocratic power for forty years one of the noblest of royal speeches) was preceded by the Reformation. The revolt of the nation against the tyranny of the Stuarts was primarily a religious movement and was

largely due to the shameful persecution of the Puritans. Devout Christians conducted the struggle for the nation's rights from first to last. Such men as Eliot and Hampden, Pym, Essex, and Oliver Cromwell, were men of God before they were patriots or soldiers, and proved that faith in the Most High is mightier in the day of battle than mere earthly honour. Similarly, the Revolution of 1688, which finally drove the Stuarts from the throne of England, was in its essence a religious movement; and the Evangelical Revival not only gave rise to those varied forms of philanthropy which are the glory of our day—it also ushered in the Reform Bill and the succeeding movements for the extension of the franchise.

Under the ægis of Christianity the rights of nationality have obtained recognition, and the smaller nations (whose great protector is Britain, the Gospel nation) have won the recognition of their right to political existence. The national aspirations, however, which have been fostered by the Gospel and the conception of the State which has developed under its influence are not narrowly provincial. They form the ante-chamber to a wide and true cosmopolitanism. There is no place in the Christian conception either for the cosmopolitanism which makes light of the claims of nationality, or for the patriotism which ignores the rights of others. The doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man, while it does not exclude the love of country any more than the love of home, demands a full recognition of the brotherhood

of those for whom Christ died but who are not comprehended within the bounds of a given nationality. Thus, the Saviour has originated the true cosmopolitanism—the universal Brotherhood of Man. This conception imposes on those who perceive it not merely imperial but universal responsibility. In every clime His followers labour. The white man knows their voice. It has been heard in prayer and praise in the inland parts of China. Those who possess no word for God have heard its tones, and the mission field bears its marvellous testimony to the power of the Son of Man. Since the days of the Apostles—even if their days have any story to compare with that of modern missions—there has been no such marvellous story as that of the mission fields. The missionaries go to Patagonia, to the South Sea Islands, to the darkest portions of Central Africa with the simple story of a Saviour's love, and whole communities are changed in thought and habit, so that the dark places have become light and the rough places smooth, as in the early days of the Gospel history.

CHRIST'S INFLUENCE DEPENDENT UPON THE ACCEPTANCE OF HIS OWN ESTIMATE OF HIS PERSON

“It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love and has shown itself capable of

acting in all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has not only been the pattern of virtue but the highest incentive to its practice, and has exerted so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and than all the exhortations of moralists. This has, indeed, been the well-spring of whatever has been best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, the persecution and the fanaticism which have defaced the Church it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration."¹

Even this great and true ascription of power to the Person of Christ which is so often quoted by Christian apologists utterly fails to give an adequate explanation of the facts. The humanised Christ has no influence whatsoever. The world owes nothing to Him. The Christ who is mighty to save is the Divine Christ. It is because He is manifestly Divine that the Lord has been able to lay hold upon the hearts and minds of men and to change not only their ideals but their lives.

Christ has won the love and adoration of countless millions because He is the Revelation of Divine Love. The truest genius is to be loved. The love which Napoleon awakened in the heart of France is a more real tribute to his greatness than all his victories. It

¹ W. E. H. Lecky, "History of European Morals," II., p. 88.

was his foreign empire, which he founded on force, that brought about his ruin. But Napoleon cannot rule from the grave, and the France which idolises his memory has driven forth his family as exiles.¹ After nineteen centuries of the diminishing glass of historical perspective (as Carlyle somewhere calls it) historians will allot him some two or three pages of historical record. Nineteen centuries have passed since Jesus our Lord trod this earth, and every year He has loomed larger on the historical and practical horizon. His influence is infinitely more active and permeative to-day than it has ever been before. Those who would die for Napoleon are now very few and far between, but every town and village contains those who would rejoice to die for their Saviour and are attempting the far harder task of living for Him. There is no question that He is adored. Since men do not adore—however they may admire—a mere memory, we are justified in pointing out that the sole explanation of Christ's influence among men is to be found in the fact that He lives among and works for us, even though mortal eye cannot see His Form.

Thus the influence of Christ as a power among men has never been that of a mere teacher but of a living, present and mighty Leader. Nay, more, every single reform which is due to Him is a result of the exalting of Christ as Lord. How was the great principle of self-sacrifice established as the true principle of human

¹ Note B.

life? By the example of the Divine Christ. Whence does it derive its influence over men's hearts and lives? From the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The history of self-sacrifice, Mr. Lecky tells us, is mainly the history of Christianity, and he deplores the decay of this principle as the dark shadow which rests upon the canvas of Rationalism.¹ Thus self-sacrifice originally found its incentive in the Divine Christ, and its practice has always been proportionate to the living faith of any given age in the Incarnation of the Son of God. On what does the great revelation of God as Father and Friend depend? If the Gospel history is to be trusted, or for that matter the history of succeeding ages, was it not given by One who claimed that He and the Father were one? Has it not been accepted by men who knew themselves to be guilty sinners just because that One is the revelation of God—the Express Image of His Person—and had made their peace with God through the blood of His Cross? What reason is there for accepting the Saviour's concept of God the Father if you refuse to accept the grounds on which He believed it? How long will the optimism which has sprung from the mistaken belief that a Father God watches over the destinies of the individual and the race alike continue to exist?

Whence comes the increased estimate of individuality which has had such beneficent results? Once again,

¹ See the concluding chapter of "The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe."

the answer must be from the Divine Lord Jesus Christ; for it is the fact that He is the Brightness of the Father's glory which has shown the infinite worth of individuality; it is the Divinity of Christ which renders redemption possible to man and all the glories of moral restoration; and it is the Divinity of Christ which justifies our faith in the Fatherhood of God and in its corollary—the Brotherhood of Man.

If we turn to the Saviour's influence upon the ideals and practice of family life the same thing is apparent. His influence has, as a matter of history, depended upon His Deity. The very justification of His teachings is dependent upon His Godhead: for it is absurd to say that in any mere man "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female." If the doctrine of the Deity of Christ be erroneous, that of the Brotherhood of Man has originated in the delusions or falsehoods of a Jewish artizan; and the historical source of the purification of the family life, of personal purity, of the rights of womanhood, of the abolition of slavery, of the establishment of political freedom, of the mightiest humanising force known to history is a delusion. Are these ideas true or false? Are not the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man precisely the most fruitful ideas for good which are influencing men in the present day? Were not the abolition of slavery, the recognition of the dignity of labour, the giving of their due rights to women and children, the guarding of the sanctity of home life, the

sacredness of personality, political freedom, mighty and admirable achievements? Yet they have all not merely found their inspiration in a deluded Jew, but have depended, and do depend, for their efficacy upon a sufficient portion of mankind being deluded into the belief that He is the Son of God. We may well say that the testimony of history is that Christ is the greatest Benefactor of mankind, whether we regard His work from a religious, moral, social, or political standpoint; that His power to help has depended upon faith in His Deity; and therefore, since delusions do not bring forth truth nor deceit abundant and overflowing blessing, its testimony to the Deity of Christ is irrefragable.

CONCLUSION :

MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS

Wherefore seeing that we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

Christ, as the Son of God, incarnate in our nature, is the only One qualified to undertake this work; and as Son of God and Son of Man He did it. He alone could enter, on the one hand, into the meaning of the sin of the world; on the other, into a realisation of all that was due to that sin from God, not minimising either the sin or the righteousness, but doing justice to both, upholding righteousness, yet opening to the world the gates of a forgiving mercy. In Him we see that done which we could not do; we see that brought about which we could not bring; we see that reparation made to a broken law which we could not make; we see, at the same time, a righteousness consummated we long to make our own, a victory over the world we long to share, a will of love we long to have reproduced in ourselves, a grandeur of self-sacrifice we long to imitate. And appropriating that sacrifice, not only in its atoning merit but in its inward spirit, we know ourselves redeemed and reconciled.

J. ORR.

God's child in Christ adopted—Christ my all—

What that earth boasts were not lost cheaply, rather
Than forfeit that blest name, by which I call

The Holy One, the Almighty God, my Father?

Father! in Christ we live, and Christ in Thee—

Eternal Thou; and everlasting We!

The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death;

In Christ I live! In Christ I draw the breath

Of the true life!

S. T. COLERIDGE.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION.—MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS

THE CHARACTER OF CUMULATIVE EVIDENCE

MANY speakers and writers on Christian Evidence have most justly emphasised the great additional strength which arises from the fact that the Faith is buttressed on every side by quite independent lines of argument : for the laws of probability, which compel us, if one step of our argument is dependent upon the previous step, to multiply the fractions representing the probabilities that the steps are independently right so as to get the real probability of the conclusion being right, force us to add the probabilities which are derived from independent lines of reasoning so as to get the gross probability in favour of the conclusion to which they severally point. If, for example, the probability of a given horse winning the St. Leger is three-fifths, and the probability of the winner of the St. Leger also winning the Derby is also three-fifths, the probability of the given horse winning both races is only nine-twenty-fifths—a practical certainty for the bookmaker. If there are, therefore, seven steps in our reasoning, all of the *a* probability which is the highest of mathema-

tical probabilities and is usually about nine-tenths, the result is positively improbable. Even if there were only six steps in the reasoning, the probability is too small for us to care to deposit £100 in a bank on its strength. But if we take several lines of argument converging to a common conclusion, but only having a slight independent probability, we have, since we must add the fractions instead of multiplying them, a very fair probability that the conclusion to which they point is right. The application of this method to the subject in hand will enable us to realise the strength of the Christian position: since each several line of argument brings its quota of probability to swell the sum-total in favour of the rationality of Christian faith. The strength of a rope is the combined strength of all its strands, just as that of a chain is the strength of its weakest link, so that even a slight probability may be of considerable importance. If these facts are borne in mind, it will be difficult to escape the conclusion that faith in Christ is justified: for many convergent and independent lines of proof (most of which, in their turn, are buttressed by several distinct series of arguments) attest the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE ADDUCED

Let us now collect the facts which have been established.

I. Our first line of proof was that a preparation for the work of Christ is discernible in the history of the world.

1. A special preparation, which provided an environment for the incarnation is evident from the history of the Jews. This is shown by the facts that—

(1) The Jews occupied the one region in the world whose physical and geographical conditions were suitable for the promulgation of a universal religion; (2) by the remarkable history of the Jewish nation which records the education of the race which was to produce the Central Figure of history; (3) by the ethical Monotheism of Israel, which alone could make a suitable environment for the Incarnate God; (4) by the whole ritual worship of the Jews which can be interpreted of the work of the Christ; and (5) by the national hope of Israel, which was the coming of a World-Prince who should rule the world. This Prince was portrayed by the prophets of Israel in many rôles—as Prophet, Priest and King—all of which meet in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose lifework was depicted in detail centuries before His birth.

2. The history of Greece shows that a special intellectual preparation for the coming of the Messiah of the world is to be found in history, for—

(1) The philosophical criticism of the Greeks

destroyed the possibility of belief in the old religions, while it proved itself incapable of meeting the higher needs of men.

(2) The conquests of Alexander the Great diffused Greek language and culture throughout the known world, and so prepared a universal language, which was suitable in every way as a medium for the communication of the new religious truths.

3. The Roman Empire provided the universal peace and the rapid means of communication necessary for a persuasive propaganda.

4. These three lines of preparation for the coming Saviour of the world all met, for the only time in history, in the First Century of our era, and rendered possible the development and success of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be admitted by all who are competent to speak on the subject that the religious aspirations of Judaism, the Hellenism of the ancient world, and the Roman dominion, are necessary to the explanation of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the phenomenon of Messianic prophecy, though its applicability to the Master may be questioned or denied, will be admitted as a necessary factor in the situation. How is it that these factors and conditions only came to their full development at the time of the birth of the Saviour, and that they have never existed at any other period of the world's history? Unless

scepticism can give a full and clear answer to this question, it stands self-condemned.

II. The second series of proofs is derived from the Self-witness of Christ.

1. The Saviour claimed explicitly and implicitly that He was the Son of God and enjoyed a unique relationship to Him. We know that He predicated Divine functions of Himself with the utmost freedom.

(1) His claim to be Judge of the entire human race is utterly inconsistent with any consciousness of personal sinfulness, for His standard of judgment is the relationship of the culprit to Himself. It is also clear from this claim that He conceived Himself to be God: for no mere man could presume to decide the fate of mankind.

(2) His claim to be the Saviour of man, to forgive sins, is a definite claim to a Divine office, and therefore, to essential Deity. The Old Testament never contemplates any other Saviour than the Almighty.

2. The perfection of His character, as revealed by His actions in almost every conceivable set of circumstances, has compelled the adoration of believers and the reverence of all right-minded sceptics, and well supports the most stupendous claims which have ever issued from the mouth of man.

3. The perfection of His teaching also supports His claims for—

(1) Its profound originality distinguishes it from all merely human utterances, and it is so pregnant that the mind of man has been unable to exhaust it after nineteen centuries of ceaseless study. (2) It is also perfect, so that there is no reason why, in the nature of things, any single utterance of the Carpenter of Nazareth should ever pass away. (3) It was delivered with a personal and final authority, which distinguishes it from all other teaching. Its primary characteristic, we might almost say, is its preface, stated or implied—"I say unto you."

4. We also saw that the testimony of the Gospels to Christ, after naturalistic criticism has done its worst, still leaves us with a Divine Christ. This is undoubtedly the most important line of the evidence; and the admissions of hostile critics are such as to prove its truth. If we are to state the general line of argument in the form of a single question, we must fall back upon the great dilemma—either God or Bad.

III. The third line of proof is afforded by the mighty works of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are in accordance with the character and claims already examined.

1. These works are the natural corollary of the Superhuman Person; they were performed in a

hostile environment; and their distribution among the four Gospels shows that there was no tendency to multiply miracles, or to unduly dwell upon their marvellous character, in the Apostolic age.

2. Generally speaking, the miracles are not theatrical, and are comparatively few in number. They are certain in action, worthy in character of a Divine Author, and the principal intrinsic objections to them disappear on the assumption of the hypothesis that the Author was Divine.

3. The miracles of the Lord form a system, which reveals His Divine character.

(1) The miracles of healing reveal His power of undoing the effects of sin. (2) The surgical miracle reveals His power of counteracting the ill-effects of human freedom. (3) The miracles of exorcism reveal Him as Lord of the destinies of the spirit-world. (4) The Coincidence and Nature miracles reveal Him as Creator, as immanent in Nature, as the Giver of Life, and as having the power to take it away.

Thus, the miracles of our Lord have all the marks of attestation which are known to historical science, and pass the most stringent tests of legitimate historical criticism. Above all, they form a system which was not known to any of the Evangelists, and which reveals the Saviour in the exercise of the powers of Deity. The pertinent questions in this connection are: Could

legend have provided a complete system of miracles which would reveal the Worker as essentially God? Could legend have secured that four independent writers should between them (not knowing that such a system existed) have recorded the miracles which form that system? If the facts be justly stated, what is the only legitimate inference as to the Personality of the Worker?

IV. The next line of proof is afforded by the Superhuman Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is amply attested, no greater attestation being possible in the circumstances.

1. The unique character of the event is of very great importance, the idea of the Virgin Birth (as distinct from that of Incarnation) being unknown to mythology.

2. The Monotheism of the Jews rendered the idea most abhorrent to those who promulgated the fact.

3. The Old Testament, though its prophecies are not so clear as to have been intelligible before the event, contains adumbrations of the fact.

4. The character of the records shows that they were recorded in all good faith, and that the accounts are entirely independent:

- (1) St. Matthew's account is obviously that of the foster-father, and shows that the normal explanation in a wicked world occurred to him; (2) St. Luke's account is equally certainly that of Mary; (3) the accounts, so far

from being divergent, constitute a most real unity and—if examined in the same way in which a candid historical critic would examine apparently conflicting witnesses to a mundane event—in no way conflict.

5. The witness of the other New Testament writers presupposes the Virgin Birth; for—

(1) The two most prolific use language which implies it; and (2) they must have known of the existence of the story, and, if legendary, were bound to controvert it.

6. The Virgin Birth offers an adequate explanation of the method of the earthly origin of the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. The next line of proof is afforded by the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is attested by the highest degree of proof available for any event in ancient history.

1. The fact of the Lord's death and burial are certain, and the fact of the guard obviates the possibility of fraud.

2. Eleven distinct appearances in all are recorded by the New Testament writers; of these—

(1) Two were to the women; (2) one was to the official representative of the Apostles; (3) one was to two other disciples; (4) three were to the Apostles and others; (5) one was the great Official Manifestation in Galilee; (6) one was to a hostile member of his own family;

(7) one was the final Ascension manifestation to the Jerusalem disciples; and (8) one was to the persecutor, Saul of Tarsus.

3. The witnesses, whether regarded from the point of view of intelligence or character, are highly accredited; for—

(1) They did not expect the Resurrection; and (2) until they were overborne by the logic of facts, they tried to explain the empty tomb and the appearances of the Risen Lord by the same theories as have found favour with the negative critics.

4. The circumstantial evidence for the Resurrection is partly conceded by the naturalistic critics.

(1) The fact of the empty grave is conceded by Lake, Gardner, and others. (2) The fact of the grave-clothes is of importance, for it precludes the possibility of the Body having been removed unless by the mortal putting on immortality. (3) The fact of the change in the character of the disciples, admitted by Dr. Percy Gardner, is of the very highest importance. (4) The definite time assigned to the Resurrection—the third day—fixes the occurrence within a few hours. This is practically decided by the weekly feast of the Lord's day, which goes back to the earliest days of Christianity. (5) The definite time assigned to the appearances is also practically

certain, for the public ministry of the disciples began too soon for the appearances to have occupied more than forty days.

5. The character of the Lord's Body precludes the possibility of legendary influence ; for—

(1) it was a Spiritual Body and entirely responsive to the motions of His will, and not bound by the limitations of earthly existence ; and
(2) it was an objective and material Body which was sensible to touch and could assimilate earthly substances. Gardner remarks on the insistence of the narratives on the physical and objective character of the appearances as one of the most curious features of the problem.

6. The fact that the disciples saw something, or thought that they did, is admitted by Professors Lake, Gardner and Schmiedel, among others.

7. Our last fact is the coherence of the narratives, which, admittedly independent in origin, can be formed into a coherent narrative with the aid of scissors and paste and a little common-sense.

Since none but God can raise the dead, it is clear that the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby His Mortal put on immortality, constitutes a Divine seal upon His Person and Work, and signifies the Divine approval of His highest claims. If this conclusion is rejected, the historical evidence for the Resurrection

must be shown to be insufficient, and a satisfactory explanation of the phenomena which have been established must also be given.

VI. The next line of proof is more or less complementary to the last; for it is certain that the Lord, unless He rose from the dead, cannot have ascended up on high. The Ascension, however, is proved by sufficient independent testimony.

1. The references to it in the Epistles and other non-Lukan writings show that it formed a fundamental fact in the consciousness of the writers.

(1) It is often mentioned by St. Paul in such a way as to prove that he referred to it as an historical event. (2) It is absolutely fundamental to the thought of the Epistle to the Hebrews; (3) St. Peter contrasts it with the Resurrection, which nobody denies to have been a physical event in his estimation.

2. Detailed accounts of it, containing records of incidents which, if they had not been recorded, we would have been obliged to presume, are given by the great historian of the early Church.

3. The accounts, so far from being materialistic, conceive the spiritual world as merely separated from us by the thin veil of matter and reveal a highly spiritual conception.

4. It is a necessary corollary, as Professor Gardner admits, to the physical resurrection.

The Ascension, being the visible exaltation of the

well-beloved Son to the right hand of the Father, forms a final proof of the Saviour's Deity. The question which must be answered by the negative critic in this connection is not merely, "How can I whittle down the historical testimony?"—but rather, "How can the spiritual character of the accounts and the universal belief of the Apostolic age be explained on the hypothesis of legend?"

VII. The testimony of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ to His essential Deity forms our last source of contemporary evidence. If the Apostolic evidence is the testimony of eye-witnesses, who were intimately acquainted with the Master and had every opportunity of forming a correct estimate of the character and personality of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no reason to doubt its competency. This is further assured by the fact that we do not possess their formal confessions of faith, but only the independent and occasional witness of their letters to the communities under their care. Thus, our materials are not mere formal head-statements but living expressions of personal faith. From among the mass of Apostolic testimonies we selected and examined the four most representative types, and saw that the Lord's Deity was recognised alike by His family, His Apostles, and by the mightiest intellect which has ever opposed His claims.

1. St. James, His half-brother, describes Him as the Manifestation of the Divine glory.

2. St. Peter, the leader of the Apostles in the

stormy days of early Christian history, ascribes many Divine attributes to Him.

3. St. John, His most intimate friend, exhausts the language of Greek philosophy in describing His ineffable Deity.

4. St. Paul, the bitterest and ablest enemy which the Cross has ever had, describes the crucified Carpenter of Nazareth in set terms as essentially God, in the first three groups of his Epistles, while the last group exhausts the resources of human speech in proclaiming the ineffable dignity of the Son of God.

If we reject their testimony, it is incumbent on us to explain the extraordinary impression which the Lord Jesus Christ indubitably made on those who had the best opportunities of knowing the weaknesses and defects, if any, of His character, and who were prejudiced by race and faith alike against the acknowledgment of His claims.

VIII. An examination of the testimony of succeeding ages has shown us that faith in the Divine Christ is the only explanation of the following facts.

1. The immense change in the conception of God, who is revealed to us in Christ as a loving Father. Optimism, which has only, and does only, flourish under the ægis of the Divine Christ, has sprung from this conception.

2. The immense improvement in the estimate of individuality which has resulted in—

(1) increased self-respect ; (2) increased respect for others ; (3) the origin and acceptance of the ideal of personal purity ; (4) the establishment of the ideal of self-sacrifice which only flourishes side by side with faith in the Deity of Christ ; (5) and of the ideal of Duty—that is, of following good for its own sake.

3. The immense change for the better both in the standard and practice of family life : for—

(1) the sanctity of the home ; (2) the dignity of menial labour ; (3) the rights of womanhood, including the abolition of easy divorce ; (4) the rights of childhood ; and (5) legitimate parental authority, have all been vindicated by the faith of the Gospel.

4. The immense change in the ideal of our relationship to the State must not be forgotten ; for the following things are among the gifts of the Divine Lord to His people—

(1) the dignity of labour ; (2) the abolition of slavery ; (3) political freedom ; (4) the rights of nationality ; and (5) the true cosmopolitanism.

We have also seen that the naturalistic Christ is a miserable Failure who has achieved nothing ; that, if we can place any trust in the teachings of history, in the experience of the race, the Christ who is mighty to save is the Divine Christ.

Thus we have adduced eight distinct lines of proof of

the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, each of which is attested by several subsidiary lines of proof. When we have made all possible allowances for error, there still remains an overwhelming probability, an insurmountable moral certainty, that Jesus Christ our Lord is God indeed.

THE UNITY OF THE PORTRAIT

We must here urge—and surely with absolute justice, since the assumption of its truth gives the key to human history and destiny—the marvellous consistency of the portraiture. The long ages which preceded the advent of the Redeemer were filled with the preparation of His coming. The fulness of time sees Him born of a Pure Virgin; for the Sinless One assuredly cannot be merely the Fruit of a corrupted stock. He starts His life's work in the lowly condition of a Galilean artizan, and yet everything about Him is sublime. His character is so perfect that even the malignant criticism of nineteen centuries must admit that He is the Paragon of men. His teaching equals His character in sublimity and perfection, and is in every respect worthy of the claims which He undoubtedly advanced. Death overtakes Him, but He could not be holden of death, and behold He is alive for evermore. This Mortal hath put on immortality, not merely to continue life among men but to enter into the joy of absolute fellowship with God. After many manifestations to His followers, He

leads them out to Bethany and a cloud receives Him out of their sight. The disciples return to Jerusalem where they await the coming of the Holy Ghost. Then the cowards of Gethsemane become the heroes of history; and, testifying to a risen and ascended Lord, they go forth in His name to do and die. Death comes to them. As one by one they enter into His rest, others take their places; and at last the Roman Empire bows at the feet of Christ. His influence becomes paramount in the world of thought and action, and ennobles man in all his relations, because it sanctifies them and makes them worthy of man's high destiny as a child of God. But—and this is the point of the supremest importance—the efficacy of His teaching and His influence depends entirely on the acceptance of His personal Deity.

Now, this is the evidence of the unity of the historical portraiture of Christ. Everything is ordered and in its own place. Human ingenuity—the only justification of the denial of the Deity of Christ—cannot account for many of the phenomena. The state of the ancient world, whose evidential significance is of late recognition, can scarcely be an invention of the myth-making spirit. The perfect agreement of the four distinct portraits of the Person of Christ, which have been preserved in the Gospels, can scarcely be the outcome of myth. The testimony of the Apostles and early writers is not legendary, and the influence of Christ on history cannot be described as a legendary romance.

If the central fact—the Deity of Christ—be mythical,

how obliging a thing it is for the whole course of human history to have fallen in with it so as to form a perfect unity!

THE DEITY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST THE ULTIMATE JUSTIFICATION OF HUMAN REASON

(1) *Speculative*; (2) *Practical*.

We have still to show that the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is the final postulate of the human reason. Here we must refer to the primary presupposition that the universe is a cosmos, not a chaos—a presupposition of both physical and theological science which we have seen to be amply justified by the results of modern enquiry. Now the existence of order implies an Orderer, that is, an immanent Divine Architect; and many objections, which no ingenuity can solve, lie against the existence of a single Divine Person. It is absurd, for example, to speak of a Being, who has existed endlessly without loving, as Holy Love; for love, if it is to exist, must have an object. If God must create in order to satisfy the higher needs of His own nature, He is no longer perfect, and is, therefore, no longer thinkable. The whole of the arguments which can be urged against Natural Theism—excepting that derived from the existence of evil—fall to the ground on the admission of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead. Thus, a Divine revelation of the con-

stitution of the Deity is necessary to the complete rationalisation of Theism. Such a revelation we have, *ex hypothesi*, in Christ, who, therefore, forms the Final Guarantee of the trustworthy character of the human reason. If He be mere Man, on the other hand, the speculative reason is left where it was, and is compelled to reject His revelation of the character of God as Holy Love.

But, besides this, the practical reason finds its final justification in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have examined, and verified by the application of most stringent tests, a vast mass of facts. We have seen that these many facts all point to one conclusion—that Jesus Christ our Lord is Divine. The witness of the history of the succeeding ages is that the results of the highest moral and spiritual beauty and delicacy which the world has ever seen have sprung from faith in the Deity of Christ. Thus, if He be not God, every means of verification which is known to human reason has hopelessly broken down. Falsehood has brought forth truth. Moral corruption has produced perfection. Reason, with its dependence on the law of causation, is confounded. Conscience, with its faith in the ultimate character of right, is equally confounded by the fact that moral turpitude somewhere, moral corruption everywhere, has brought forth the highest moral goodness. Hence we are left, mariners upon the sea of life, whose compass has broken down and whose calculations have proved utterly undependable. We must,

therefore, choose between the acknowledgment of Christ as Divine and the abandonment of faith in reason and conscience as trustworthy guides.

THE EXPERIMENTAL PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY

The line of proof which is dearest of all arguments to the mind of the empirical scientist has not yet been adduced. Once we have verified a process in our own experience, it is impossible to make us doubt its validity. The essential thing in the experimental proofs of empirical science is that a similar result is always obtained in similar conditions; but it must be remembered in this connection that no scientist (unless he could show that the conditions had been accurately fulfilled) would depreciate the validity of a method which gave a fair proportion of results because he did not get the desired result. More than this, he would not blame a method if he knew that he had not accurately fulfilled the conditions of the experiment. It can be shown, if these things are kept in mind, that a satisfactory experimental proof of Christianity is really available.

The experimental proof of Christianity is the phenomenon of regeneration, or conversion—that is, of the changed hearts and lives which result from total self-surrender to the Son of God. It is dependent upon two conditions—(1) faith, or trust in the power (and still more in the character) of God as revealed in Christ ;

and (2) repentance, or turning away from sin to God. It, therefore, involves a progressive sanctification of the whole man—a sanctification which often proceeds from very small beginnings unto perfect holiness of life.

The phenomenon of regeneration is to be seen everywhere. Every rank of life, every degree of moral worth, bears its testimony to the regenerative power of Christ-in-the-heart. The beauty of holiness is the fruit of His indwelling in individual hearts, and shows no decay after nineteen centuries of trial. The highest moral results of history have followed from acceptance of Christ, and form the experimental proof of the validity of Christian belief.¹ The Grace of Christ turned the persecuting Pharisee into the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the debauchee of Hippo into the greatest of the Fathers. The history of English monarchy knows no lives more noble than those of Alfred the Great, Edward the Confessor, Edward VI., George III., and Victoria the Good, all of whom found peace with God through the blood of the cross. Not many names are more significant for British history than those of Anselm and Latimer, Cromwell, Wesley, and Whitefield, who ascribed the glory to Christ. Among the statesmen of the last generation, none are more significant, either for personal worth or political ability, than Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury, who were not ashamed of Christ crucified. The lawyers of England know few greater names than those of the three great

¹ Note A.

Lord Chancellors of modern times—Lords Hatherley, Cairns, and Selborne—who all confessed Christ crucified. The annals of India show us that the great heroes of the Victorian era—the Lawrences, Herbert Edwardes, Havelock, Neill, and Outram—were pre-eminently servants of the living God. The source of the noblest lives and the most heroic courage which have glorified the British name has been Christ and Him crucified. The names of George Salmon, Clerk Maxwell, Tait, Lord Kelvin, Agassiz, Dana, and hosts of the other most illustrious names in the annals of modern scholarship and science, are enrolled in the Lamb's Book of Life. These men are quite as competent judges of evidence—if it comes to that—as can be adduced in any controversy. If they tell us—and their testimony is only representative of that of an innumerable host of witnesses, who are to be found in every town, in every village, of the land—that they have experienced fellowship with the Divine Christ and that He is the Source of all that is holy and beautiful in their lives, their testimony is surely entitled to the most respectful consideration.

No mere teaching of the Master, no mere religious sentiment, has this regenerative power. It belongs to the Divine Christ and to Him alone. Neither Church nor Institution has, apart from personal fellowship with Him, succeeded in obtaining a high moral result. It may be that saints are still to be found in the Roman Church; but a review of the most illustrious names of

mediæval saintship reveals the fact that those who are the glory of the roll of the canonised put faith primarily neither in Church nor Saints, but in the living Christ. The Francis of Assisi's, the Thomas à Kempis', the Teresa's all knew that the ground of their justification was the merits of Christ. Similarly, the real saints of the modern Roman Church—the Madames de Guyon, the Fenelons, the Francis de Sales—found the source of their holiness in fellowship with Christ.

Once we get away from the fellowship of Christ, the very incentive to holiness is lost. The fate of the man who attempts to reform himself, is, as a general rule—there are exceptions—that of the man from which the unclean spirit is gone forth. He walketh through desert places, seeking rest and finding none; then he taketh to himself seven other devils more wicked than the first, and his last state is worse than his first.

Here, then, is an experimental proof within the reach of everyone—the efficacy, or non-efficacy, in his own case of fellowship with Christ.

It is not true to say that we have tried the experimental proof of Christianity and that it has failed, so long as we have not surrendered our hearts to the moral right, and implored God to take the power and reign therein; unless we have put the Glory of the Divine—even though we worship an Unknown God—first in our lives; unless we have learned the great lesson that the good of our neighbour is, for us, of much greater importance than our own good; and

unless we have striven consistently to give the pre-eminence in all things to the Lord of Glory. Nor must we say that the experimental proof of Christianity has failed because we are not made perfect in a day. We must remember that we have used all the previous years of our lives to degrade our spiritual and moral faculties; that, since Christ has to take us just where He finds us and since He will not violate the freedom of His rational creatures by reducing them (even with their own consent) to machines, progress must be slow at first, but will gather force and volume like an avalanche making headway against the forces which retard its progress.

“IF CHRIST WERE AS I AM, I COULD NOT KEEP A HOUSE OR COVENANT WITH HIM, BUT I FIND CHRIST TO BE CHRIST, AND THAT HE IS FAR, FAR, EVEN INFINITE HEAVEN’S HEIGHT ABOVE MEN; AND THAT IS ALL OUR HAPPINESS. SINNERS CAN DO NOTHING BUT MAKE WOUNDS THAT CHRIST MAY HEAL THEM; AND MAKE DEBTS THAT HE MAY PAY THEM; AND MAKE FALLS THAT HE MAY RAISE THEM; AND MAKE DEATHS THAT HE MAY QUICKEN THEM; AND SPIN OUT AND DIG HELLS FOR THEMSELVES THAT HE MAY RANSOM THEM.”¹

¹ Samuel Rutherford.

APPENDIX

THE MODERN CRITICISM OF THE GOSPELS

My impression is that the great epoch-making steps in advance come from non-literary, external, objective discovery, and that the literary critics adopt these with admirable and praiseworthy facility as soon as the facts are established, and quickly forget that they themselves (or their predecessors) used to think otherwise, and would still be thinking otherwise if new facts had not been supplied to them. Nothing gives me such interest, and so illustrates human nature, as to observe how principles of literary criticism of the Old Testament which were accepted as self-evident when I was studying the subject under Robertson Smith's guidance, about 1878, are now scorned and set aside as quite absurd and outworn by the modern literary critics. But it was not literary criticism that made the advance ; it was hard external facts that turned the literary critics from their old path, and they have utterly forgotten how the change came about.

SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY.

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APPENDIX

THE MODERN CRITICISM OF THE GOSPELS

THE TENDENCY OF MODERN CRITICISM IS, ON THE WHOLE, TO CONFIRM THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY

THERE can be little question that the tendency of modern criticism tends, upon the whole, to confirm the historical character of the Gospel history; for many critics who are loath to admit the existence of the Supernatural in the sphere of human experience have been compelled, by the advance of the historical spirit and the consequent improvement in historical methods, to recognise the early dates of the documents. Consequently we find a tendency among New Testament students to place more trust in the statements of the documents—especially as many of the facts which archæology has brought to light have confirmed the accuracy of statements which were previously disputed. (Sir William Ramsay, who, as a result of his work in Asia Minor establishing the accuracy of St. Luke's geographical references, has accepted the general credibility of that historian and abandoned his former position, is representative of a continually increasing band of scholars.) The establishment of the traditional authorship and date (at all events, to a great extent) of the Gospels is of much more importance to us, as evidential students, than the interesting theories now in vogue as to the sources which lie behind the Gospels as we have them. Harnack¹ makes the following con-

¹ Note A.

cessions (from our point of view) in relation to the Synoptic Gospels:—St. Mark was written about 65—70 by its traditional author; St. Matthew (which is not from the Apostle's pen) is a product of the years 70—75, and St. Luke, which comes from the pen of St. Paul's companion, was issued between the years 78 and 93. In view of these conclusions it is hard to see what is Harnack's grievance at being adduced as a witness to the victory of the conservative critics. The fact that he shrinks from making the inevitable inferences from the facts which he has established does not alter the fact that his conclusions confirm the traditional position as stated by such scholars as Salmon and Bishops Lightfoot and Westcott. Nor is it easy to see how anyone not labouring under an invincible prejudice can escape this conclusion. The Synoptic tradition is Jewish and belongs to the first generation of Christians. In their present forms the Gospels are the work of apostolic men at the very least. They are based, *ex hypothesi*, upon earlier documents, which indefinitely force back the tradition, and therefore, according to Harnack's own showing, the period of growth is reduced within extremely narrow limits—not to mention the fact that the Gospels are so entirely independent in character (whatever their sources may be) that they possess the value of independent recensions. Thus Harnack's positions guarantee the authoritative character of the tradition, though he is not prepared to make such far-reaching concessions.

We find on turning our attention to the literary criticism of the Gospels that we are involved in an endless and extremely confused discussion. The points on which there is most agreement are two in number: that there is a common source which was used by the whole three Evangelists, and a second source, chiefly composed of discourses, which was largely used by the first and third Evangelists.

THE TRIPLE TRADITION. THE ORIGIN OF "Q."

Even if we assume that the Triple Tradition, taken in its narrowest meaning, represents the earliest and only trustworthy source of Gospel history, we are still left with a narrative which simply teems with the miraculous, and which gives us the same portrait of a Divine Saviour; but, as Dr. Salmon once said, it requires brains, not blue and red pencils, to decide what really belongs to the Triple Tradition; so that we are, even if we are only allowed the Triple Tradition, entitled to much more than the mere phraseology which is common to all three Gospels. The wide divergence of opinion as to the scope and usage of the document, which was certainly used by the first and third Evangelists, reveals the unsatisfactory character and extreme subjectivity of this class of criticism. Salmon insists that it was known to, and used by, St. Mark, while others will have none of this hypothesis. The only thing that seems certain is that the document existed, and that it was the earliest written record of our Lord's ministry; for it is inconceivable that the long discourses which it contained should have been handed down by word of mouth, or that the Lord should have made no provision for the record of some of His more formal utterances. Besides this, a late date for the document is impossible, for it depicts the Saviour as the Great Teacher and says so little about His redemptive work that it cannot conceivably have been written after His sufferings and death were realised at their true significance in the Apostolic Church. We are therefore driven to the conclusion, if there is anything definite in this kind of criticism, that the Gospels which we now have incorporate portions of documents which were drafted during our Blessed Lord's life-time—perhaps under His direction.¹

¹ Note B.

THE CRITICISM OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

Harnack assigns the Fourth Gospel to the dates 80—110, but is not prepared to admit the Johannine authorship. He insists that it is entirely independent of the earlier Gospels; so that it is a witness whose testimony can scarcely be lightly passed over. Dr. Gardner states very forcibly the value of the Fourth Gospel: "It cannot be doubted that the author of the Fourth Gospel has incorporated in his work some very valuable historical traditions."¹—but his remarks as to the teaching contained in the book must be received with caution.² There is no truth in the idea that there is a difference in the substance of the teaching ascribed to our Lord in the Fourth Gospel, and that ascribed to Him in the Synoptists, and the difference in style can easily be explained by the different circumstances in which the speeches were uttered. The statement only affords an example of the common error of the student that style does not change according to circumstances.

Even an early Christian, despite the liberal interpretation of his character, would have regarded it as shockingly profane to place his own inventions in the mouth of the Lord; for it must be remembered that this is not a case of an historian putting speeches into the mouths of his characters, but of a Christian gratuitously inventing speeches for his God.

Thus, this contention really reveals a lack of historical imagination and judgment. The speeches ascribed by the fourth Evangelist to the Saviour contain no greater claims than are involved by the statements of the Synoptists. Also it is hard to see how the Lord, unless He had spoken in some such terms as the fourth Evangelist reports, could have explained the character of His claims to His disciples;

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

² Note C.

and the wrath and fury of the Jews, which was largely religious in origin, at His blasphemy involve precisely the same inference. The traditional contention that the fourth Evangelist is supplementary¹ of set purpose to the others, that his work is largely a gathering up of the threads, and the weaving into a unity of the various aspects of the Person and teaching of the Redeemer, reduces the difficulty of accepting the speeches of the Fourth Gospel, for the Evangelist would only use those sayings which were relevant to his purpose. The writer of ancient history usually had a purpose in view. He desired to illustrate the work or glory of some great person, or of his country, and only selected those incidents which were most relevant to his subject. The significant thing about the Gospels is that the picture of the Redeemer, as drawn by four distinct artists—not of a very high order of merit—gives us the same impression of exquisite beauty and of superhuman glory and Personality.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, we will not be very far astray if we say that the following facts emerge from the criticism of the Gospels:—

(1) The authors of the Gospels were men who were in a position to know what they were writing about, and their *bona fides* are indubitable; (2) that the matter common to the first three, and also to any two, Gospels is for all practical purposes trustworthy; (3) also that we may possibly possess in the latter written records (Harnack thinks that the lost Source was by St. Matthew), which were contemporary with our Lord; (4) that the date of St. John's Gospel is, at the best, very easily within the life-time of an Apostle, and, at

¹ Note D.

the worst, possibly within St. John's life-time ; and (5) finally, that it certainly contains very valuable historical matter. In these circumstances we cannot be blamed if we disregard the charges of untrustworthiness which are necessarily made by those who, for philosophical reasons, are unwilling to admit the existence of the Supernatural in the sphere of experience ; especially as our purpose is evidential and only concerned with the general historicity of the accounts.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

A (p. 33).

“THE structure of the human frame is not merely calculated to produce certain physical results, such as sight. It is also calculated to produce, and does in fact produce, certain moral results of the highest beauty and delicacy. The most beautiful, the most elevating, the most sacred of all human feelings spring from the relations of marriage and fatherhood, and are inseparably bound up with the physical constitution of human nature. No antagonist with whom it would be worth while to dispute regards the obligations of these relationships as having a merely natural and physical bearing. They touch the soul in its inmost recesses. They call out, for weal or woe, its truth, its honour, its patience, its gentleness, its purity—in a word, its love. In proportion as they have been faithfully observed, have they revealed to generation after generation new heavens and a new earth of noble and inspiring emotions, and have suggested that most sublime of all the conceptions under which the Supreme Being can be imagined. It is not merely the material welfare of states which is dependent on these laws of morality; it is not merely any general social results whatever. It is the grace of our homes, the purity of our hearts, the refinement of our lives, which is at stake in them. The constitution of the human frame, therefore, in such a matter, for instance, as the relations of the sexes, has not merely, like the structure of the eye,

a physical end; but it has a moral end. It is directly adapted to produce the highest spiritual excellencies; and it is not fully developed or properly used except in relation to them. Now, if the production of a structure with reference to a physical end be an argument of its having proceeded from an intelligent will, how much more is the adaption of a structure to a moral end an argument of its having proceeded from a moral will."—H. WACE, *Op. cit.*, pp. 214—215.

B (p. 33).

Bishop Butler's definition of moral government should be remembered in this connection, and the whole of the chapter (Analogy, Pt. I, chap. iii.) should be most carefully read. "Moral government consists, not barely in rewarding and punishing men for their actions, which the most tyrannical person may do, but in rewarding the righteous, and punishing the wicked; in rendering to men according to their actions, considered as good or evil. And the perfection of moral government consists in doing this, with regard to all intelligent creatures, in an exact proportion to their personal merits or demerits."—BERNARD'S EDITION, p. 46.

C (p. 36).

The Reverend W. R. W. Roberts, B.D., Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and Scientific Lecturer in the University, has discussed the question of miracles in relation to the Law of the Conservation of Energy in a lecture to working men on "The Bible and Modern Science." "We have said that we accept the principle of conservation of energy as obtaining now, and all we postulate is a directive power on the part of God in the field of force. A directing influence does not interfere with the principle of the conservation of energy. My

favourite example is the following—suppose the field of force to be that produced by the attraction of the earth, and suppose a material particle were moving along one of the lines of force, what amount of work, I ask, would be necessary to transfer it to any other given line of force in the same field, so that the particle should move along this new line of force with the same velocity? The answer is—No work is necessary. No expenditure of work or energy is required to transfer the particle from one line of force to another, the particle having the same velocity on each line of force. . . . You will grant me now, I presume, that a being, having knowledge of all laws of nature, could, without abrogation of any one law, have his wishes accomplished, always admitting his directivity or power of directing the forces resident in nature. Hence for us, the difficulty which so many have felt (when they read the Bible) with regard to miracles has entirely disappeared. By His directive power, without the abrogation of His ordained law, God can effect any result.”

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

A (p. 52).

“To the Jewish mission which preceded it the Christian mission was indebted, in the first place, for a field tilled all over the empire; in the second place, for religious communities already formed everywhere in the towns; thirdly, for what Axenfeld calls ‘the help of materials’ furnished by the preliminary knowledge of the Old Testament, in addition to catechetical and liturgical materials which could be employed without much alteration; fourthly, for the habit of regular worship and a control of private life; fifthly, for an impressive apologetic on behalf of Monotheism, historical teleology, and ethics; and finally, for the

feeling that self-diffusion was a duty.”—HARNACK, “Mission and Expansion of Christianity,” I., p. 15.

B (p. 56).

“Israel, in fact, is devoted wholly to the highest religious idea. Take away that idea and it ceases to be anything, even in guarding its own hearths; while proscribed and exiled it finds a fatherland in the strange country, so soon as the great thought which constitutes its nationality revives within it.”—DE PRESSENSE.

C (p. 65).

“Two points deserve special notice in connection with the Messianic application of the Psalm. It contains no confession of sin; and it has none of the terrible imprecations which startle us in the kindred Psalms lxix. and cix.”—A. F. KIRKPATRICK, “Psalms,” p. 115.

D (p. 66).

Compare Dean Farrar’s description of crucifixion: “Indeed, a death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping short of the point which would give the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries—especially of the head—became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood,

and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of burning, raging, thirst; and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself—of death, the awful unknown enemy at whose approach man usually shudders most—bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release.”—“Life of Christ,” pp. 697—698.

E (p. 69).

Lord Macaulay thus compares the Greek literature with the very worst elements in British literature: “The worst English writers of the seventeenth century are decent compared with much that has been bequeathed to us by Greece and Rome. Plato, we have little doubt, was a much better man than Sir George Etheredge. But Plato has written things at which Sir George Etheredge would have shuddered. Buckhurst and Sedley, even in those wild orgies at the Cock in Bow Street, for which they were pelted by the rabble, and fined by the Court of King’s Bench, would never have dared to hold such discourse as passed between Socrates and Phædrus on that fine summer day under the plane-tree, while the fountain warbled at their feet, and the cicadas chirped overhead.”—“Essays,” p. 571.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

A (p. 86).

One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favour of Christianity is not sufficiently enforced by apologists. Indeed, I am not aware that I have ever seen it mentioned. It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth

of human knowledge—whether natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere—has had to discount. This negative argument is really almost as strong as is the positive one from what Christ did teach. For when we consider what a large number of sayings are recorded of—or at least attributed to—Him, it becomes most remarkable that in literal truth there is no reason why any of His words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete.—G. J. ROMANES.

B (p. 87).

A single example, taken at random, will suffice to show the justice of this remark. The Saviour's words to St. John, when hanging upon the cross: "Behold thy mother" become "To thee I trust My mother; let her be thy mother for My sake!"

C (p. 88).

"In all the words of Jesus the reader is impressed with that completeness of statement; the truth stands there whole and entire. You never require to look at the language from some special point of view, to make allowances for the circumstances and the intention of the Speaker, before you recognise the truth of the words. You do not feel that there are other justifiable points of view which are left out of account, and that from those points the saying must be considered inadequate. The word is never one-sided. Take any one of the sayings, such as "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," or "Wisdom is justified of all her children," or "The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath." Each of them is a complete and rounded whole, perfect from every point of view. There is nothing more to be said. The true commentator may expound from

various points of view the truth of these matchless expressions, and thereby render a real service to the reader. You must look at each saying first in one light, then in another, analyse it, explain it, and you will better appreciate all that lies in it; but you cannot add to it, or make it more complete than it is. It stands there once for all. It is the final statement.”—SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY, “Pauline and other Studies,” pp. 31—32.

D (p. 97).

See Bruce’s “Humiliation of Christ,” Lect. v. He quotes F. C. Baur to the following effect:—“According to the diverse attitude of men towards the doctrines of Jesus as the ground law of the kingdom of heaven, they are divided into two essentially different classes, whose moral worth, brought to its absolute expression, is expressed by the contrast of everlasting blessedness and everlasting damnation. But what holds in the first place of the doctrine of Jesus holds also in the next place of His Person, so far as He is the Originator and Promulgator of the same. With His doctrine His Person is inseparably connected. He is the concrete embodiment of the eternal significance of the absolute truth of His doctrine. Is it His doctrine according to which the moral worth of men is to be judged for all eternity? then He it is who speaks the sentence as the future Judge of men.” Professor Bruce justly asks, “Is the claim to exercise such tremendous functions a psychologically probable one in the mouth of one who is Himself a transgressor?”

NOTE TO CHAPTER III

A (p. 115).

“It is the custom of unbelievers to speak as if the air of Palestine were then surcharged with belief in the

supernatural. Miracles were everywhere. Thus they would explain away the significance of the popular belief that our Lord wrought signs and wonders. But in so doing they set themselves a worse problem than they evade. If miracles were so very common, it would be as easy to believe that Jesus wrought them as that He worked at His father's bench. But also it would be as inconclusive. And how then are we to explain the astonishment which all the evangelists so constantly record? On any conceivable theory these writers shared the beliefs of that age. And so did the readers who accepted their assurance that all were amazed, and that His report went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee. These are emphatic words, and both the author and his readers must have considered a miracle to be more surprising than modern critics believe they did."—BISHOP G. A. CHADWICK, "Commentary on St. Mark," p. 33.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

A (p. 141).

"The aversion which primitive Christianity felt for polytheistic paganism was so deep-seated that before supposing the new religion to have been influenced by pagan mythologies, we must examine with the utmost care the points of resemblance which are sometimes found to exist between beliefs and institutions. No doubt the history of the Church abundantly proves that between the worship or doctrine of paganism on the one hand and advancing Christianity on the other, there was mutual action, and, so to speak, slow and constant infiltration, but nothing warrants historical criticism in considering the tradition of the miraculous birth of Christ as merely the outcome of elements

foreign to the religion of the Biblical revelation." Lobstein, *Op. cit.*, p. 76. If Lobstein finds the impossibility of a pagan origin for the birth-stories insuperable, another negative critic, Schmiedel, finds the difficulties of a Jewish source equally insuperable:—"Thus, the origin of the idea of a virgin birth is to be sought in Gentile-Christian circles."—"Encyc. Bibl.," 2964, Usener in art. "Nativity, Encyc. Bibl.," ascribes St. Matthew's account to the same quarter.

B (p. 148).

"If the progress of critical and exegetical science has shown, on the one hand, the futility of all harmonistic theories for rescuing the authority of the pedigrees, it has more than compensated for the loss by establishing with equal certainty the acceptance of the fact of the Davidic descent of Jesus by Himself, His contemporaries, and His immediate followers." (H. W. Bacon, art. "Genealogy of Jesus Christ," Hastings' "Bible Dictionary," II., p. 138). We might here remark that the fact that, with our present knowledge, a reconciliation of the pedigrees is difficult, by no means invalidates belief in the honesty or capacity of the evangelists—or even in the real accuracy of the trees. Nothing is more common than genealogical trees, which widely diverge and are irreconcilable until they are brought into relationship by other and external evidence which gives the key to their proper understanding. The sole importance of the genealogical trees is from the point of view of the Davidic descent; and documentary evidence, such as the genealogies—while of interest—is not of vital importance. What is important is that the documentary evidence should have existed when the registers were in existence. This the two genealogies make absolutely certain.

C (p. 148).

Professor Zahn takes the same view of the Matthean account—that it is apologetic—and explains the mention of the four females in the genealogies as follows:—“The honourable female ancestors of the race, such as Sarah or Rebecca, are not mentioned, but only those women whose characters are highly offensive to Jewish, and, in three cases out of four to every human, feeling. As it is plain that the evangelist had no blasphemous intention, there remains only one imaginable reason for these statements—the same apologetic purpose which governs his account of the Conception and Birth of Jesus.”—*Op. cit.*, pp. 128—129.

D (p. 150).

“The critics speak of the discrepancies of the narratives. Much more remarkable, it seems to me, are their agreements, and the subtle harmonies that pervade them. The agreements, if we study them carefully, prove to be far more numerous than may at first strike us. Here, *e.g.*, is a list of twelve points, which lie really on the surface of the narratives, yet give very nearly the gist of the whole story. (1) Jesus was born in the last days of Herod. (2) He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. (3) His mother was a virgin. (4) She was betrothed to Joseph. (5) Joseph was of the house and lineage of David. (6) Jesus was born at Bethlehem. (7) By Divine direction He was called Jesus. (8) He was declared to be a Saviour. (9) Joseph knew beforehand of Mary’s condition, and its cause. (10) Nevertheless he took Mary to wife, and assumed full paternal responsibilities for her child—was from the first *in loco parentis* to Jesus. (11) The Annunciation and birth were attended by revelations and visions. (12) After the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary dwelt in Nazareth.”—*ORR, Op. cit.*, pp. 36—37.

E (p. 157).

Gal. iv., 4. Dr. Knowling says:—"The expression, 'made of a woman' is sufficiently striking to have caused even Hilgenfeld and Steck to note that it is in excellent accordance with the generation of Jesus without a human father, although not expressly attesting that fact."—*Op. cit.*, p. 65.

F (p. 159).

"If a sinless Man was ever born, experience and science would alike suggest to us that there must have been something entirely exceptional in the circumstances of His conception in the womb." J. H. Bernard, *Op. cit.*, p. 209. We may also quote the following sentences: "Certainly, the more deeply the teachings of biological science are studied, the more difficult is it to believe that any being, born of human parents under the ordinary conditions of natural generation, could be free from the *damnosa hereditas* of the weaknesses and faults of his ancestry. Not the theologian only, but the physician also, will tell us that a sinless man would be a physical miracle, no less than a moral miracle, and that the two cannot be dissociated, so close and intimate in human experience is the connection between mind and body."—*Ibid.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

A (p. 168).

The Pharisees "believed in the possibility of resurrection, and they feared that Jesus might, after all, rise from the dead, as He had threatened to do. It would be their policy to prevent such a consummation, if possible; and for this purpose they joined the Sadducees in seeking

from Pilate a Roman Guard. Their diabolic idea was that, even if Jesus should rise again from the dead, sixty Roman soldiers would surely be sufficient to overpower Him and bring Him once again to the Jewish Judgment-seat. Under the pretence of preventing the disciples from stealing the dead body, they secure a guard for the purpose of seizing, if need be, the living Christ, should He emerge from the well-known tomb."—*Op. cit.*, pp. 102, 103. (Dr. McCheyne Edgar's work is as valuable as it is original.)

B (p. 185).

"The lesson which Saul had to learn before he could make any progress in knowledge of the Divine nature was that the actual Jesus of recent notoriety in Palestine—the Jesus whom he had seen and known, as I believe—was still living, and not, as he fancied, dead. His was not a soul disciplined, eager to learn, ready to obey. It was a soul firm in its own false opinion—not even possessed of true opinion—resolute and hardened in perfect self-satisfaction, proud of what it believed to be its knowledge, strong in its high principle and its sense of duty. There was no possibility that he should by any process of mere thinking come to realise the truth. Nothing could appeal to him except through the senses of hearing and sight."—RAMSAY, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

C (p. 191).

"The mysterious silence of the Gospels concerning most of the period between the Resurrection and Ascension is incredible on any theory but that of the truth of the narrative. Most certainly the imagination of the writers was not given a free field in the matter. The general sobriety and practical wisdom which characterises the disciples after the reputed Resurrection and Ascension of their Lord are anything but charac-

teristic of such ill-regulated excitement as must have followed mental delusion.”—G. F. WRIGHT, *Op. cit.*, pp. 24—26.

D (p. 201).

“ The disciples who at the time of the crucifixion were dispersed, hiding, utterly discomfited, are found within a very brief space of time, bold, confident, ready, and determined to conquer Judæa and to carry on their Master’s work. All this requires the operation of forces of which history knows very little. Where history looks for evolution to set aside the hypothesis of divine inspiration, it is altogether overmatched by facts.” Gardner, *Op. cit.*, p. 289. “ If the disciples for a brief period fled to Galilee, they soon returned to Jerusalem, the very place where the Master had been slain, and where they had daily to meet His murderers. And, instead of dwelling timorously in the shade, they were openly proclaiming that their Master was still with them in the spirit, and that only by union with His spirit could the world be saved. In His name they healed diseases and cast out demons; in His name they offered forgiveness of sins and the favour of God to all who would join them. And in His name they cheerfully braved persecution and even martyrdom.” *Ibid.*, p. 290. Needless to say, this is not a fair account of the Apostolic preaching, but it does justice to the changed Apostolic character.

E (p. 202).

Thus Strauss:—“ It is impossible that a Being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that He was a

Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which He had made upon them in life and in death; at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, or have elevated their reverence into worship." Quoted by Bruce, *Op. cit.*, pp. 386—387.

NOTE TO CHAPTER VI

A (p. 212).

"Passages such as these take for granted the Ascension of our Lord with the same quiet and deliberate conviction as the ordinary events of His earthly history; and it is impossible to explain them in any other than their literal and historical acceptance."—MILLIGAN, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

A (p. 235).

"When at last the idea of Paul was, even reluctantly and imperfectly, accepted by the Emperors no longer claiming to be gods, it gave new life to the rapidly perishing organisation of the Empire, and conquered the triumphant barbarian enemy. Had it not been for Paul—if one may guess at what might have been—no man would now remember Roman and Greek civilisation. Barbarism proved too powerful for the Græco-Roman civilisation unaided by the new religious bond; and every channel through which that civilisation was preserved, or interest in it maintained, either is now or has been in some essential part of its course Christian after the Pauline form."—RAMSAY, *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

B (p. 241).

"The Christology of the Colossian Epistle is in no way different from that of the Apostle's earlier letters. It may indeed be called a development of his former teaching, but only as exhibiting the doctrine in fresh relations, as drawing new deductions from it, as defining what had hitherto been left undefined, not as super-adding any foreign element to it. The doctrine is practically involved in the opening and closing verses of his earliest extant epistle. The Church which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."—BISHOP LIGHTFOOT, "Colossians," p. 122.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

A (p. 254).

"Among all the men of the ancient heathen world there were scarcely one or two to whom we might venture to apply the epithet 'holy.' In other words, there were not more than one or two, if any, who besides being virtuous in their actions, were possessed with an unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and besides abstaining from vice, regarded even a vicious thought with horror. Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries this higher-toned goodness, which we call holiness, has existed. Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare. Perhaps the truth is that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad, and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself. And if this be so, has Christ failed? or can Christianity die?"—SIR JOHN R. SEELEY, "Ecce Homo."

B (p. 255).

Mrs. Browning has beautifully expressed this aspect of Napoleon's genius in "Crowned and Buried":—

"I do not love this man; the man was flawed,
For Adam—much more Christ: his knee unbent—
His hand unclean—his aspiration, pent
Within a sword sweep—pshaw! but since he had
The genius to be loved, why, let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave."

NOTE TO CHAPTER IX

A (p. 289).

Principal John Caird has beautifully expressed the practical influence of this experimental proof of Christianity in his "Fundamental Ideas of Christianity," I. p. 97:—"Men sometimes speak as if our belief in Christ were a thing that stands or falls with the proof of the authenticity of ancient documents, and demonstrated historic accuracy of the extant records of Christ's earthly life. In their main substance these records have, indeed, stood the test of criticism; but our faith in the Christ they reveal rests, I believe, on a more impregnable foundation than historic tradition—even on the inward witness of a spiritual presence here and now, which we can realise more profoundly than when men looked on the face, and listened to the voice, of Jesus of Nazareth—the inward witness to the presence of that redeeming, purifying, hallowing Spirit that was incarnate in Him, and that still is, and for ever, living, not only for us but in us, and in all who open their spirits to Its life-giving power."

NOTES TO APPENDIX.

A (p. 295).

"Let me, therefore, now express my absolute conviction that historical criticism teaches us ever more clearly that many traditional positions are untenable and must give place to new, startling discoveries. We do, of course, recover something of the old ground, in that we can now more accurately circumscribe the home and the time of the formation of the most primitive and fundamental Christian tradition. We can now assert that during the years 30—70 A.D., and on the soil of Palestine—more particularly in Jerusalem—this tradition as a whole took the essential form which it presents in its later developments, and that the only other factor which has played an important part in this formation is the influence of Phrygia and Asia with their populations so strongly intermixed with Jewish elements." (Harnack, "Luke the Physician," pp. vi.—vii.) "Our position is therefore unassailable when we assert that the whole synoptic tradition belongs to Palestine and Jerusalem, and has no connection with Gentile-Christian circles except in the redaction of St. Luke."—*Ibid.*, p. 166.

"The Gospel of St. Matthew was written as an apology against the objections and calumnies of the Jews, which were soon also adopted by the Gentiles. This evangelist alone has a distinct interest in our Lord's teaching as such; he instructs, he proves, and all the while he keeps the Church well in the foreground."—*Ibid.*, p. 167.

B (p. 297).

"It is impossible that any of the disciples could about thirty years after the crucifixion, picture Jesus simply as the great living Teacher, or could set forth the way of salvation as being through the true knowledge which is revealed only by the Son of God, and yet never in any

way allude to His death as being an essential factor in the process of salvation. The disciples realised immediately after the crucifixion that they had never rightly understood the teaching of Jesus in His lifetime, because they had missed the cardinal fact of His death. Hence there is only one possibility. The lost Common Source of Luke and Matthew . . . was written while Christ was still living. It gives us the view which one of His disciples entertained of Him and His teaching during His lifetime, and may be regarded as authoritative for the view of the disciples generally On the one hand, it was a document practically contemporaneous with facts, and it registered the impression made on eye-witnesses by the words and acts of Christ. On the other hand, it was written before those words and acts had begun to be properly understood by even the most intelligent eye-witnesses."—SIR W. RAMSAY, "Luke the Physician," pp. 86—89.

C (p. 298).

"It certainly incorporates some very valuable and probably authentic traditions of some events in the life of Jesus. . . . But the writer who is concerned with the teaching rather than the life of Jesus will find it impossible to reconcile the accounts of it given by the synoptists on the one hand, and the fourth evangelist on the other. If it were written by a personal follower of Jesus, the words of the Master must have marvellously grown and changed their character in his mind. If it was written by a Christian of the second generation, he must have used notes or materials furnished by an eye-witness."—GARDNER, *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

D (p. 299).

"If we have called St. John a glorified St. Matthew, because his aim is also didactic and apologetic, we with

equal justice may call him a glorified St. Mark and St. Luke, for he shares in the aims which dominate both these evangelists. By means of the historical narrative he strives, like St. Mark, to show that Jesus is the Son of God, and like St. Luke, to prove that He is the Saviour of the world, in opposition to the unbelieving Jews and the disciples of St. John the Baptist. Thus the leading ideas of the synoptists are found in combination in St. John."—HARNACK, *Op. cit.*, p. 168.

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